DECEMBER, 1948

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ARGOSY

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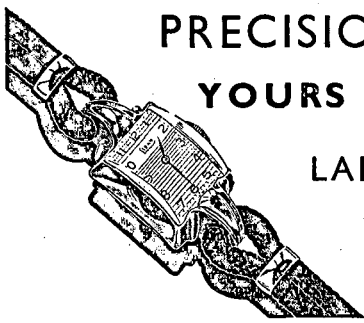

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ARGOSY

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In Praise of December

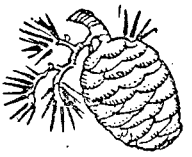
NOW that the flush of summer is gone,
And in the lane no flower is seen,
No hedge in leaf,
No tree in gold or green;

Now that the golden fruit is stored,
And in the wood no song is heard,
No merry stir
Of song from any bird;

Now that the uncompanioned wind
Blows cold across the naked land,
And, hung in black,
Bare trees like mourners stand;

Winter reveals through falling rain,
A strength which summer had left unseen:
Beauty and peace
Which, but for tears, had been in vain,
Which, but for loss, had never been.

FRANK KENDON



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NO ONE WILL EVER KNOW

What *was* it that the little Andalusian flung away that night?

by GEOFFREY HOUSEHOLD

THEY were so angry that they entirely missed the point. Their voices were hoarse with fury, and gasping for insults as for breath; so that, at the end, they never knew whether they had witnessed an atrocious crime or a supremely chivalrous act of deliverance. The little Andalusian was equally capable of either.

That fairground was no place for creatures compounded of fire or, perhaps, of water. Magnificently earthy was the crowd of tall Basques: farmers, fishermen and townsmen full of the vigorous Rioja wine which rooted them to their soil and gave to their good-humoured spirits the cruelty and luxuriance of trees, overshadowing all but their own kind.

The town was two fields distant from the turbulent circle of lights. The sea was only a lane away, but lying unobtrusive in its summer silence. Bounded by the darkness of a ring of oaks, the fair became an individual world with its own repetitive pattern of life, gay in the clinking of glasses and money, the clattering of hoop-la rings, the clarion music of Spanish roundabouts, the cries of showmen and the popping of the shooting galleries.

Paco Igarzábal and Salvador Aguirre strolled tolerantly along the outer aisle of booths. They were well dressed, but showed their solidarity with fellow Basques by wearing *boinas* on their heads and no ties around their collars; only by an air of patronizing joviality did they reveal that either of them could have bought the fair and fairground.

They had visited the Six-legged Calf and the Hairy Woman. They now halted outside the booth of the Mermaid, feeling in massive pockets for small change. The entrance was not painted with any of the exciting monsters that decorated other booths. It was surmounted by a large, severe and well-lettered placard:

PEJEMULLER AUTENTICA

(Genuine Mermaid)

It added, *Of Canary Island Waters*—as if there were different and

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no less authentic breeds of mermaid from other waters.

Paco and Salvador entered the booth and joined the half dozen men who were standing on the dusty turf before a curtained recess. The mermaid's proprietor, seeing that there was now a quorum, closed the stretched canvas door. He was a little fellow with slender, flaring nostrils, thin lips and pointed chin. He looked more like a clerk than a showman, for he was dressed in neat, shabby black. A drooping bow tie, though only a length of black tape, suggested the minor intellectual.

He delivered no advertisement, seeming to trust in the rarity of his exhibit. He turned out the central light, drew apart the curtains, and said, "*Señores*, look!" in a tone of modest pride, as if wondering that to him it had fallen to catch or make or care for the mermaid.

The glass tank was some five feet long. The top was open, so that the customers could see it was brimful of water. The sides and the back were hidden by a stucco of pebbles and marine growth, some real, some painted. A faint green light illumined the *pejemuller*.

Her body to the waist was that of an undernourished girl of twelve, the breasts just forming. From the waist down she was the conventional fish. The tail was a marvel of its creator's artistry, for it sprang from the skin in little, irregular scales, leaving no definite line at which the sceptic could declare it to be attached. The scales grew larger over the full and powerful curve, sliding upon each other sleekly and naturally; then lessened as they passed, imperceptibly, into the smooth membrane of the flukes.

She lay supported on one thin arm, facing the customers. Her face was yellowish, and small even for her dwarfed body. The eyes were pale and expressionless. The sandy hair was long and sparse, and so tangled among the rock and seaweed at the bottom of the tank that it could not be said to float, or not to float. She breathed, sometimes violently, but no bubbles came to the top of the water. Her only other movement was a slight and graceful swaying of her flukes. This she performed as if it were a drilled duty, now forgetting for too long an interval, then offering an extra wave or two to show repentance.

Paco Igarzábal leaned upon the rope which divided him from this phenomenon, and gave himself up, with a lusty prurience, to close examination of its anatomy. He was a wholesale grocer and he best appreciated life when it was delivered in good coarse truck loads.

If they were not engaged in making money, Paco and Salvador Aguirre were boon companions. They played billiards together on

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two evenings a week; they went to the bulls together, and they visited the stews of Bilbao together. The chief reason for their friendship was that they did no business together.

Salvador was a man of some education; that is to say, his system of bookkeeping was up to date; he could carry on the correspondence of his timber yard in correct Spanish; and he did not believe in God. He was not, of course, an atheist, for that would have been to identify himself with the enemies of timber merchants. He was immensely busy within the limited area of his interests, and his workmen called him the wood-louse.

Salvador twisted himself this way and that among the onlookers in order to examine the tank from various angles. He apologized importantly and continually, and at last delivered his opinion.

"I will tell you how it is done," he said. "There is a glass sheet which runs away from us diagonally"—he belched and had another shot at the word "—diagonally across the tank from top to bottom. Thus, friends, you see an unbroken sheet of water, but the mermaid is in an empty compartment."

"Then how does she breathe?" asked a fisherman. "There would be no air."

"She is wholly immersed in water," answered the showman, the Andalusian. "The *pejemuller*, gentlemen, does not, as I have myself observed, breathe like a Christian. She admits water into her body through a system of gills."

"But where?" roared Paco. "Where does she keep them?"

He suggested several possible positions.

"*Caballero!*" protested the showman abruptly. "Be decent! She can hear."

The *pejemuller* showed no sign of hearing. She waved her tail in languid response to the enthusiasm of the world outside her tank.

"But can she understand?" asked Salvador Aguirre with a precise little smile. "She seems to me to be an idiot."

"She understands as much as you," replied the Andalusian with a show of courtesy.

Paco shouted with laughter, and slapped his friend on the back.

"I say it is a little girl," declared Salvador, his wrinkled face working with an excited obstinacy that hid humiliation. "I say that the tail is of coloured scales of mica, and that diagonally—"

"It is a *pejemuller*," interrupted the showman.

"It would not be your daughter, perhaps?"

The face of the Andalusian burned and went white as ash. "It appears I am among brutes," he said.

"And whom, *señor*, do you call a brute?"

"Since you have said, *señor*, that I would exhibit my daughter..."

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"Man, I said there was a diagonal and—"

"There is no diagonal."

"There is a diagonal."

"You know as much of diagonals as of your father."

"You lie!"

"Stupendous bastard!"

Paco Igarzábal swayed forward his big frame between the two smaller men.

"Let us see, friends! Let us see! What is this? Are we going to kill one another for a little difference of opinion? This gentleman says that there is no diagonal and that, by logic, the *pejemuller* is a *pejemuller*. My companion says that there is a diagonal, and that the gentleman is, perhaps, exhibiting his afflicted daughter."

The Andalusian leapt at him, just as Paco expected—for he was never one to miss a chance of sport. Paco grabbed him by the opening of his black waistcoat, and held him at arm's length. The Andalusian twisted and stamped, answering the renewed insults of Salvador who was kept back by Paco's other arm.

"Let us see!" repeated Paco. "A little calm, gentlemen! All this for a diagonal, that can be settled in a moment!"

"Son of a dog!" hissed the Andalusian.

"Big names!" Paco answered, unaffected. "How much will you take to show us the tank?"

"More than I paid for your mother," the Andalusian retorted, and spat in his face with a clean trajectory parallel to the arm which held him.

Paco Igarzábal barked with anger and flung him to the ground. Onlookers crashed down upon the struggling men, trying to separate them. The tank rocked on its trestles and spilled water over the edge. The mermaid held her pose, ceasing only, since no eyes stared at her, to move her tail.

At last the tumult of bodies cohered into two groups. The fisherman, huge and benevolent, held the Andalusian. Paco and Salvador were surrounded by the rest of the onlookers, all counselling prudence at the tops of their voices. Not a word could be distinguished in the uproar. The tent heaved and shook as passers-by pushed down the door to listen to so magnificent and delectable a row.

Paco was now more angry than Salvador—if, indeed, there could be any choice between two men who were living in a fantasy of rage—but, seeing himself surrounded by fellow townsmen who were wont to respect him for his supercilious calm, he choked on his stream of oaths and shouted at the Andalusian in a voice that

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quivered with the effort of control:

"Listen, you! This is to end all argument. I will buy your mermaid and your tent! Understand?"

This astonishing offer brought silence. The Andalusian seemed to recoil as if his spirit were about to leap into passion beyond the reach of all humanity. The fisherman who held him tried with sincere simplicity to conciliate.

"Sell him the mermaid at your price, friend!" he said. "Don Paco has money. And thus—in peace!"

"Ten thousand pesetas," offered Paco.

"I am a gentleman," answered the Andalusian, each word a slow, reluctant gasp of pain. "I carry this vile trade among brutes who have no upbringing, but I am a gentleman. You have called me a liar. You have said that this unhappy thing is my daughter. Now you think that for your money—" His voice rose to a scream, "Where, among whom am I? Ay, my pride! My shame! Unnamable degenerates! Must I show you what it is to have a heart?"

He fell upon his knees, and the fisherman, not knowing whether this unexpected limpness was a mere feint or the illimitable appeal of a defeated soul, rested a light, embarrassed hand upon his shoulder. The Andalusian dived beneath the rope and flung himself upon the nearest trestle.

The green light went out. The tank thudded on the ground, and the water flopped in two solid masses against the canvas of the booth. The plate glass tinkled and crashed as the Andalusian flailed it with the trestle.

Men fumbled for the switch, heaving and swearing in the corner where the showman had turned off the central light. No one crossed the rope to enter that shadowy hell.

White light glared. At the back of the booth stood the Andalusian, the trestle in his right hand, his left around the waist of the *pejemuller*. She clung to him with her arms round his neck, pitiable as a shivering monkey.

She was even smaller than she had seemed in the tank; her tiny yellow head was against his cheek, but the glittering tail did not reach his knees. Except that she clung to what she knew, she was not human.

The Andalusian walked through the tent and over the prostrate door. He still held the trestle in his hand, but it was no fear of physical violence that parted the crowd of powerful Basques. He passed under the harsh lights of the roaring fairground, blood and filth upon his face, clothes dripping water. He walked proudly. What march, what music of sunlit trumpets he heard—that, too,

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was accepted by the onlookers. They followed.

He took the lane to the sea, where, beyond the circle of trees, only the softness of the night gleamed on the black and changing mirrors of that marvel which flapped against his thigh. He strode over the rock and down to the boat-slip. The ripples of the Atlantic, inch-high, hissed as they parted over the descending stone.

"God guard thee, little friend!"

He loosened the thin arms from his neck, and flung the *pejemuller* into the night sea. She took the water cleanly, rose once and went under, her tail seeming to flick the starlit surface.

"And now—leave me in peace!" cried the Andalusian.

He stumbled away across the rocks, unnoticed, uncared for. The crowd were arguing, shouting with a recrudescence of anger, gaping into the darkness for another sight of the *pejemuller*.

In the morning, when they wanted the Andalusian, he had gone, leaving behind him only the debris of the tank, impossible to reconstruct. They understood that he had flung away his living for the sake of his honour; that was no thought foreign to any of them, except, perhaps, to Salvador. But what it was that he had flung away neither high tide mark nor the passing of the months disclosed.

* * *

ASSESSED

A man received an income tax assessment form. Until the past year he had never earned any great amount of money so that he had not been called upon to file a return.

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Respectfully yours . . .

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CRUSADER

"That sort of thing never happens," she said

by ELIZABETH SHEEAN

IF you stand on the enchanted bridge that spans the river of the years, you will sometimes hear a whispering echo of the past or catch sight of a coloured reflection in the water. They are not always, it must be admitted, very truthful echoes; and the reflections are sometimes strangely distorted by the ripples or the drifting weed. If you want the fine austerity of fact, you must dig for it, and sweat for it and lose your sleep of nights for it; and great will be your reward if you persevere. But it is pleasant sometimes to stand on the bridge, in the sunlight, and take what the stream sends floating past, whispering, whispering—

A long time ago, there was in the fair land of France a wide and sunny countryside starred and jewelled with castles. Perhaps there were only three or four castles there in reality, but the stream sparkles and dazzles and cheats the eyes until it seems that at every five miles' end there stood a castle towered and battlemented, enclosing emerald lawns and shady cedar trees and terraced gardens and a pond for the carp. Perhaps it was sometimes winter there, and cold and wet and disagreeable; but as the stream mirrors it, it is always spring, with apple-blossom blown against a blue sky by day, and a velvet dark, where a crescent moon rides, by night. And the towers and pinnacles seem to have been built less because of the necessities of defence than because it is delightful to live in a fairy tale castle and sweep long silken skirts up and down the spiral stairs. For these were the things that counted in this enchanted country.

Each of the castles was governed by a young chatelaine of exceptional wit and beauty; they had all of them been married against their will to disagreeable husbands, but all these husbands were away fighting in the Crusades, and had taken their grim knights and men-at-arms with them. That was the only thing that could be said in their favour. And so the castles were full only of the young and the gay and the light-footed—the ladies, and the pages and the squires, and of course the troubadours, the sweet singers of songs.

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In the prettiest of the castles there lived the prettiest of the chatelaines, and her name was Amoret. Her husband, like all the other husbands, was away in the Holy Land, and apart from a few household cares her days were passed in dancing and singing and playing bowls on the emerald lawn, and embroidering silken flowers, while Blondin sang to her. At least, the stream says his name was Blondin, and though I do not fully believe it, I have not time to stop and think of another. He was young and tall and handsome and very much in love with Amoret; and he made up songs, very sad and beautiful, full of the spring and his undying passion as he sat on a silken cushion at her feet, and sang them to a lute accompaniment and gazed up into her eyes in a way that was very touching. And Amoret began to think she was in love with him.

For after all, one had to be in love with someone. It was hardly decent not to have a lover. All the other chatelaines had a young squire or a troubadour or someone who adored them, who worshipped them—and the ladies were not unkind for ever. They were very discreet about it—secrecy in a lover was rated as highly as fidelity and humility—but still, one knew what went on. And after all, if you had been forcibly married to a very disagreeable husband, who, even if he took himself off to the Holy Land, sometimes had inconvenient ideas about girdles of chastity—was it not almost a duty to find love elsewhere? The priests might frown and threaten, but what were the Courts of Heaven compared with the Courts of Love?

So Amoret thought she would yield and thought she wouldn't, and wavered and softened, and didn't know her own mind when Blondin, as his habit was inclined to be, knelt at her feet and told her that she was his saint, and he was dying for love of her. Sometimes she gave him her hand to kiss, and once, on a soft and scented night, she let him kiss her mouth. But she was very inexperienced. She kept her lips tightly closed, and instead of being set on fire with reciprocating passion, she thought what a wet mouth he had. It was very disappointing.

So while she was still making up her mind there came to her the news that all these silken chatelaines dreaded to hear—the news that her husband was on his way home from the Holy Land. The stream says his name was Reginald Fitz Urse, which sounds unlikely, but we will let it stand. The dismay in the castle was beyond all description, and Blondin looked unutterable things and said Carpe Diem in its flowery and considerably more lengthy Old Provençal equivalent. And the neighbouring ladies sent messages of sympathy and advice rather favourable to Blondin. And Amoret was worried and spent hours superintending the preparations for this unfortunate

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homecoming, and once she said "No, no, don't bother me!" rather sharply to Blondin, and then was sorry, and let him sit at her feet all evening and sing her his new song, which was very beautiful and pathetic and made her weep, so that she thought she must be in love with him after all. But life was very perplexing, and she didn't know what to do.

Then one sunny afternoon—need I mention the apple-blossom?—Reginald Fitz Urse came home. Amoret sat waiting with her ladies in the hall, and she heard the clatter of horses' hooves in the courtyard outside, and the jingling of bits and spurs and a clamour of voices, not of the most elegant. Then the door was flung open, and in strode Reginald Fitz Urse and his men. Amoret rose to her feet, her prepared speech on her lips.

"Ha!" said Reginald, swerving aside and smiting one of the pages on the back in a friendly fashion. "You're Arnulf. You've grown up. You were a skinny little rabbit when I went away." The object of this salutation grinned, extremely gratified. Reginald moved on. He remembered everyone who had been in the castle before he left, and had a word for them all. And of those whose faces were unfamiliar, he had to inquire their names and the details of their arrival. Amoret, watching this snail-like progress through the hall, sat down again. Blondin met her eye with the look of one whose feelings are beyond the reach of words. At last Reginald's triumphal progress came to an end and he reached the dais. Amoret rose to her feet again.

"Wel—" she said.

"And you're Amoret," said Reginald, kissing her in a hearty sort of way. "You have grown into a very pretty woman."

"Welcome home, my lord," said Amoret, rather blankly.

"And bless my soul, here's Blondin. Always used to slide about in the saddle like a pat of butter on a hot spoon. No grip, no grip. Still, I've no doubt your songs are better than your riding. We must see, we must see."

"Shall we dine, my lord?" said Amoret hastily, detecting rather an affronted look stealing over the face of her adorer. Sir Reginald was more than ready. They sat down at table together.

It was a noisy meal, undeniably noisy. Instead of their usual elegant discussion of the duties of the courtly lover, or the comparative merits of the *alba* and the *ballade*, Sir Reginald told them about Crusading in Palestine.

He ought to have been a bore—all the other chatelaines said their husbands were bores when they came back from the Holy Land. But he wasn't—he was very amusing. In a gruff staccato voice he told them stories which made them all laugh—once he even caught Blondin off his guard, so that he forgot his tragic disapproval. And

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he drew his knights into the conversation, and made them talk too. What was more he wanted to hear all that had been happening at home and what they had all been doing. When they had finished eating he asked Blondin for a song. And Blondin sang his best, and it was very beautiful, and everyone sat very still and attentive, and when it was over Reginald said he had never heard anything finer. And then he said they must hear old Fulbert sing the marching song they used to sing in Palestine.

So one of the knights climbed up on a stool and sang in a deep rich baritone a catchy little tune with a chorus that all the other knights and Sir Reginald bellowed with him. When he reached the eleventh verse Sir Reginald stopped him and said the rest wasn't suitable for ladies, and anyway, it was time for bed. At that Amoret felt suddenly very lost and shy; and meeting Blondin's eye, with which he was trying to convey commiseration with her and his own exquisite torment of soul, didn't help matters at all. She and her ladies rose and bade good night to the company. And Amoret withdrew to the solar, and began to prepare for bed.

Soon the door opened, and Sir Reginald came bustling in. He was not as tall as Blondin, and he was not in the least handsome, and the eastern sun had burnt him as brown as a berry. But in his brown face his eyes twinkled very pleasantly. He tucked Amoret's hand under his arm, and sat down beside her on the edge of the bed.

"Now let's have a comfortable little chat," he said. "When I went away you were only a little girl; you've changed, you're a woman now. I expect I've changed a bit too. At least you must have forgotten me. Could you remember what I was like?"

"No," said Amoret, "I don't think I could."

"You don't know," he went on, giving her arm a friendly little squeeze, "how often I've thought about coming home, during the hot days and the long nights. This crusading's all very well, I said to myself, it's a man life, but I've a young wife at home and no children yet to come after me when I'm dead. So as soon as I could get away with honour, off I came. And as I came riding up today, and saw the orchards and the fields of young wheat, and the river and my castle towers, I thought, there it is, and it's as beautiful as I expected."

"I'm glad it is," said Amoret.

"And when I saw my wife," he said, "she was more beautiful than I had expected." And suddenly he took her in his arms, and kissed her, not like the kiss he gave her in the hall, but a lover's kiss. And instead of remembering that she was an unfortunate wife, instead of even noticing that his moustache was rather bristly, Amoret put both her arms round his neck and tried to hold him closer to her still. Which was anyway impossible. And there

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flashed into her mind the fantastic, unheard-of, almost treasonable suspicion—" I believe I have fallen in love with my own husband ! "

It was of course quite ridiculous, the sort of thing that the other members of her society would never understand, had in fact categorically declared to be an impossibility. But unfortunately, the next morning Amoret was even surer than before that it was true. " Only of course, no one must know," she thought.

Sir Reginald was very busy during the day, inspecting the farmland and village and the castle grounds. He was not likely to give anyone cause to suspect her guilty secret. She avoided Blondin as much as possible ; and he, for his part, seemed to feel that discretion was the better part of love, and did not seek for any stolen interviews. And so it came to pass that one soft moonlit evening, when the scent of the flowers stirred in the quiet air, Amoret went walking in the orchard, not with her passionate lover, in the orthodox, approved and respectable fashion, but with the disagreeable husband her father had forced her to marry six years before. This, in itself was not a matter for shame, rather for resignation. But Amoret was glorying in it. With one hand she held up her silken skirts from the dewy grass, and the other hand was tucked under her husband's arm, and now and again she gave a little skip of happiness. " Now what's all this nonsense," said Reginald, without any warning, " about Love ? "

" N-Nonsense about love ? "

" Well, I've been hearing things, you know," he went on, " all this last week. People talking and the songs they're singing now. To hear some of these young fools talk, you'd think a woman was a sort of angelic creature whose lightest word was law to them ; you'd think from what they say that to touch her hand would be the greatest honour they could hope for or she would grant. And to hear some of these new romances, you'd know it wouldn't be. And to hear them both, you'd think a woman's husband is the last person in the world to whom she owes any respect or duty or affection."

" A man forced upon her by her relations," murmured Amoret.

" Then if she deceives this monster, and gives herself to a lover, everyone thinks she is perfectly right and justified, eh ? "

" Yes—they do," whispered Amoret.

" And what do they think when she falls in love with her husband ? "

" That is the sort of thing that never happens."

" Never ? "

" Well, perhaps once—or twice."

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"And what do they think then?"

"Oh, that it is *dreadful!*" cried Amoret, and he leaned against an apple tree, and laughed and laughed until she began to laugh too, and the tree shook, and the petals came floating round about them.

"I suppose," said he, "that that is why that long-haired idiot has been making sheep's-eyes at you all this last week?"

Amoret had no difficulty in identifying this unflattering description.

"I have been faithful to you, Reginald," she said in a small voice.

"I know you have, my dear," he said, "and so you will be when I am gone again."

She came very close to him then, and put her hands up on his shoulders. "Must you go back?" she said. "What good does it do to go fighting so far away?"

"I don't really know," he admitted. "It seems rather the thing to do."

"What about the cornfields, and the towers and your young wife, and the children who are going to come after you? Do you *have* to go back?"

"I suppose not," he said slowly. "Do you really want me to stay, my Amoret, my little love?"

"Yes, I do," she said, and began to laugh again.

"But what will your neighbours say? Won't they sneer?"

"Let them sneer," said Amoret.

And they did. At first when they knew that Sir Reginald had become a fixture at the castle, they said, "Poor Amoret!" But when it became apparent that she was actually enjoying his society, after a brief period of kind incredulity, they lifted their pretty upper lips, and gave up all hope of her. Blondin, after a short time, made polite excuses and went to reside in a neighbouring castle, and was gloriously miserable at the feet of a more deserving object.

And the stream, chuckling and gurgling round the willow roots, says that Amoret and Reginald had four sons and two daughters and were happy to the end of their days. And having said that, would say no more.

* * *

ABSURD

Using nothing but beetroot, Samuel Gockers, a fish-porter of Leeds, has made a life-size model of a singing mouse, and put it in a bottle. Asked whether it ought not to be a ship, Gockers said, "You don't make ships out of beetroot."

J. B. MORTON, *Here and Now*

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THE STRANGER

There was not a voice laughing anywhere as the men stared at the doorway

by TEMPLE THURSTON

THE Momedan's Head Inn is situated in a hollow of the South Downs. Undoubtedly it was originally called the "Mahommedan's Head." There is a signboard hanging over the porch on which, with the aid of a little imagination, can be traced the all but obliterated features of a black man's face. It must have been painted for more than a hundred years, and for so long has not only the inn, but the hamlet also, been called Momedan's Head, that it would be useless to persuade anyone in the neighbourhood that there was the vestige of an "H" in the spelling of it.

It lies off the road that runs through Mavant from Melchester to Marling, and all those villages that shelter under the north line of the hills to Godhurst. From Mavant it is a quiet road. If you want to know how quiet it is, let me tell you they have been mending it for five years—it is as quiet as that.

Three miles from Mavant the road begins its climb over the Downs, and falls down at last into the pool of Marling village like a cascade tumbling in spirals over the rocks. It is there, in the heart of the Downs, that the "Momedan's Head" crouches down in its hollow, hidden by the beech trees, and scarcely a traveller or a tramp or a stranger of any sort calls there for a drink from one year's end to the other.

It is surrounded by a few cottages and a forge. That is the community of the hamlet of Momedan's Head. There is no shop. No post office. If you need such conveniences of civilization as these, you must walk for them. There is good beer. That is enough for the farm labourers who occupy the cottages. But the forge is inevitable. Without the forge the neighbouring farms would be at a standstill. For this is the life of Momedan's Head, a succession of seasons, a succession of crops, like a team of horses coming and going, appearing and disappearing over a hilly field.

There is no point in romancing about this because this is not a romantic story, yet it has the eerie atmosphere that falls about lonely places at evening-time when the rooks have come home and a humid silence steals out of the trees before nightfall.

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It was midwinter. The Mavant constable had not been along that way for three weeks. He was a new man. Always careful of her closing hours, Mrs. Corder was particularly careful with the new constable. It could not be said as yet whether he was of a friendly nature. She never knew when he might turn up. Sharp at ten o'clock she went into that other room off the bar where they played Ring'em and Shovehalfpenny, and in all the dignity of her best black dress she said:

"Time, please—"

And there was not one man when she said it that way who wasted any more time over his glass of beer. In three minutes they were all gone, and the windows that had burnt so brightly were swallowed up in darkness.

There is a whole volume to be written about Mrs. Corder, with her white hair, her rosy face, the handsome figure of a stout but comely matron she carried with a pride of command you seldom see these days. But it cannot be written here. She stands out in this story. But then in any community of people she would do that. Even in the days before she married Corder, when she was in service in a titled family, the picture of that household is incomplete to me without her. And so now, in the "Momedan's Head," she ruled them all. Within the walls of the inn her word was law.

It was half-past four in the afternoon, two hours before opening-time. The folly of that! And the men coming out of the fields by five! The front door was shut and locked. Mr. and Mrs. Corder and the two girls, Molly and Jenny, were having their tea in the kitchen.

"Soon as Christmas is over," Mrs. Corder was saying, with the clear vision of a month's work spread like a map in front of her—"Soon as Christmas is over—" A knock on the front door brought all their eyes together. The vibrations of that knock travelled like fading footsteps through the house. As they died away, they all looked at Mrs. Corder. Involuntarily she accepted the responsibility of command.

"You go see who it is, Molly," she said. Molly rose at once and went out. They all sat listening. In the distance of the passage they heard the bolts drawn and the door opened. A faint murmur of voices reached the kitchen. Mr. Corder kept his head perched on one side like a startled bird. Mrs. Corder's lips were pursed, as though she were saying "Ssh!" to a lot of children. Jenny's eyes were staring and wide.

After a few moments Molly appeared at the kitchen door with sternly suppressed emotion and said, "The Mavant constable wants to see you."

"Who?" said Mr. Corder. "Me?"

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"No—me," said Mrs. Corder with reasonable assumption.

"What about?"

"Wouldn't say," replied Molly.

There were a few moments of speculation when everyone, even Mr. Corder, offered his opinion. But as Mr. Corder was speaking while Mrs. Corder was speaking, the sound common sense of his suggestions was not heard. Mrs. Corder's remarks were even sounder than common sense.

"Ask him to come in here," she said, "and, Jenny, you get out another cup. It's freezin' outside. He might like a cup of tea."

Mr. Corder had thought of many reasonable things, but he had not thought of anything as sound as that. A few moments later the new constable from Mavant was standing with his peaked hat in his hand at the kitchen door.

"Come in," said Mrs. Corder. "Get the constable a chair, Jenny. Molly pour out another cup of tea. Haven't you finished yet, Corder?"

Corder had not finished. Nothing would induce him to finish. But he made way for the constable at the table and stood in a dark corner of the room listening, where everyone forgot his existence.

The constable poured his hot cup of tea into the saucer and said it was going to be a cold night.

"Freezin'," said Mrs. Corder. "Water's ice what I gives my chickens to drink."

"Snow before long," said the constable.

"When the wind drops," said Corder out of the dark corner; but no one heard him.

It was ten minutes before the constable said anything to justify his office. Even then, looking no more than out of the corner of his eye and speaking with a voice that reduced significance to the smallest minimum of suspicion, he only said:

"Anybody been about here today?"

"What sort of body?" asked Mrs. Corder.

By the mutual consent of her two daughters and the complete elimination of Corder in the darkness, she conducted the entire conversation with the constable as though they had been sitting alone in that kitchen over a quiet cup of tea.

"A stranger," said the constable, by no means prepared to give away all his information at once.

"You seen any stranger, Molly?"

"No—I haven't."

"Not a dark man, medium height, grey eyes, wearin' a cloth cap, and a brown suit with a darker patch in the seat of the trousers? Answers to the name of William Hall—alias Smith—alias Dickens?"

"If she'd seen one," said Mrs. Corder, "she'd never have known

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all that about him."

"Why, what's the matter?" asked Corder.

The constable peered into the dark corner.

"He says what's the matter," said Mrs. Corder, interpreting the sound out of the darkness.

The constable rose to his feet.

"If yer haven't seen anybody, doesn't make any odds," he said.

He went to the door and then turned round as though it had just occurred to him as he was leaving.

"If you see anyone answerin' to that description," he said, "the best thing you can do is to detain him. Lock him up; and if you take my advice, you'll lock him up safe. As soon as you've got him safe, send someone along on a bicycle to us at Mavant. We'll come along sharp and fetch him."

"Who is he?"

"Criminal lunatic," said the constable—"escaped out of the asylum by Melchester there. Shot his wife and his sister-in-law, then tied a boot-lace round his father's neck and strangled him. 'Course he may have got up into the Downs. Anyway, I'm looking round. Good night."

In the short while he had been there, the darkness seemed to have fallen. In a sharp voice, that would not admit of fear, Mrs. Corder demanded that one of the lamps should be lit. While Molly was finding the matches and striking a damp one without effect on the box, they heard the outer door slam. The constable had gone. The house was silent.

"Light that lamp!" exclaimed Mrs. Corder. "And don't stand there struck of a heap, Corder. You haven't brought that pony in and it's after five. Clear the table, Jenny."

Her voice brought back a sense of life again into the room. But none of them was happy until the lamp was lit. There was an uncomfortable noise in their ears, the retreating sound of the constable's footsteps as he mounted the hills to the Mavant road and left the "Momedan's Head" in the hollow behind him.

As Mr. Corder left the room to fetch the pony, he was heard to say, "All very well telling us to detain him, a lunatic that has killed three people. But who's going to do the detaining?"

Joliff at the forge, Jim Manning the rabbit-catcher, Tom Shire, who was a woodsman and a poacher, and two or three others, all came in that night. They sat round the oak trestle-table in the room off the bar and ordered their pints and looked at the three rings Tom Shire had put on number thirteen the night before in his game of Ring'em with the carter over at Squire Woods'.

Tom had wanted thirty-nine to get out.

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" Hang it if he didn't put they three thirteens up," said Joliff, " one on top of t'other and takin' no notice of it, 'sif that was what he'd got to do and he done it: puts t'other three rings down on table and sits here side of me and says: 'Sharp frost tonight,' he says."

The room rumbled with laughter at the memory of it. Tom's voice rose with them to a high guffaw. He listened to the account of his own feat of skill, and his manner in performing it, as though it were an epic of one of the old ballad-makers, a tale of legend that had been told through the ages.

" Oo-ay," he laughed, " and was a sharp frost, too ! "

Jim Manning rang the wire bell with its curtain-ring handle for another pint. Two others swallowed the remainder of their beer. It was Mrs. Corder who appeared at the door from the bar. She hung their glasses on her fingers and turned as she reached the door.

" Any of you boys seen a stranger about in the woods, or on the road, or maybe up on the hills ? "

Sam Joliff was forty-eight if he was a day, and Tom Shire was nearer sixty than fifty, but they were all " the boys " to Mrs. Corder.

They looked at each other in silence. It was not the sort of question they might have expected. It took them unawares. They were beginning to search their memories through the length of the day's work, when Jim Manning answered for the lot of them.

" What sort of a stranger ? "

"A dark man, medium-sized "—the constable had not written out the description—" with a dark patch on the seat of his trousers." She remembered that.

" Dark patch," said Joliff, " on the seat of his trousies."

The minds of one and all of them were recalling the trousers on the men they had seen that day, and not one could remember a stranger answering to that description.

" What about him ? " asked Jim.

" Criminal lunatic," said Mrs. Corder, who had recovered all the spirit of command, with the lighted bar and the sounds of voices, the rattle of glasses and the laughter in the room beyond. " Killed his wife and his sister-in-law and strangled his father with a boot-lace." These were the details that remained vividly in her memory. " Escaped out of that asylum they've got, other side of Melchester. Constable from Mavant came this evening. They're hunting for him."

There was no information to be got from them. She had gone with the glasses on her fingers. The room was silent. They were all looking at each other, their eyes centred like the inner point of a compass. Joliff was the first to speak.

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"If I'd seen 'un," he said, "I shouldn't have thought of lookin' at the seat of his trousies."

"They police be sharp 'uns," said Tom.

A young stockman from a farm nearby said, "Once you gone and got yourself in the hands of the likes of them, you'd never know what sort of little thing 'ud give yer away."

"You're right there, boy," said Joliff.

"I know I'm right," he said.

Tom Shire stood up and hitched round the loose seat of his trousers, exposing a patch of material so foreign to the rest of the garment that it could have been seen at any distance.

"If he'd a patch like that," said Tom, "you'd know him."

He meant it for a laugh. But none of them did laugh. It had had quite a different effect from what he had intended. They were all of them seeing the criminal lunatic there in their midst and wondering whose job it would be to tackle him. In the middle of a weighty silence, Joliff said:

"What would you do, Jim Manning, if a stranger came in now with a patch in the seat of his trousies?"

It was that patch. No other description of the constable's, so far as it had been retailed to them by Mrs. Corder, had touched their imagination. Jim Manning, the rabbit-catcher, stood up and told them what he would do. He was a boastful man. They nudged each other as he told them for the hundredth time the story of how he had stopped a runaway horse in the South Street of Melchester. And when Tom Shire said, "What sort of a patch had 'un got in his seat, Jim?"—the whole room was a rouse of laughter and the young men slamming their pint glasses down on the oak trestle-table to give a full sound to it.

"Lot they care," said Mrs. Corder from her chair in the bar, "if there be a man about would cut all their throats so long as they were wet."

The whole house was reverberating with their laughter. And then the whole house was still. There was not a voice laughing anywhere.

"What's that now?" said Mrs. Corder. "There's a silence for you." Such a silence it was, so penetrating, that without the tinkle of the bell from the other room she went to the door and looked in.

The men were still seated round the trestle-table. Their hands were gripping the handles of their glass pints, their eyes were set like a lot of rabbits to where, standing in the other doorway from the lane outside, was a dark man of medium height, and his eyes were wandering round the room.

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At the sight of Mrs. Corder appearing in the other doorway he asked in a slow voice if he could get a pint in that place.

It was a full moment before she answered and then with considerable presence of mind, she said with a steady voice:

"You wait there and I'll get you one."

Directly she had gone out she called Sam Joliff. He would not have come so quickly at any other time. His name was scarcely out of her mouth when he was there in the bar beside her.

"That's the man, Sam," she said. "It's up to you in there. Detain him. That's what the constable said. And I'll send Jack Honey over on his bicycle to Mavant."

"You can't detain a man as don't want to be detained," said Sam.

"Not unless you take the risk of his objectin' to it."

"Get Tom Shire to take him on at a game of Ring'em," she suggested, "that'll help out time while Jack's gone to Mavant. Tell Tom I said so."

"But we don't know it is the man," persisted Sam. "There's dark men and medium men through all Sussex, but none can't see has he got a patch in his trousies, 'cos he's got a long coat on."

"Never mind, you get him to play a game of Ring'em. Tom knows how to win and he knows how to last it out if he wants to. Then while he's throwing, p'r'aps one of you can lift up the tail of his coat and see."

It was all very well a woman talking about one man lifting the tail of another man's coat and that other a perfect stranger. Sam had his own ideas of the way a man might resent that. But there was no harm him playing a game of Ring'em. He went back to the outer room like a man volunteering on a forlorn hope. Mrs. Corder accompanied him bearing the pint glass. The stranger paid his one-and-fourpence. There was nothing against him there.

After a long silence, in which every man was looking anywhere but at the stranger, Sam began to talk of that game Tom Shire had played the night before. His diplomacy was clumsy but it introduced the subject. Finally, with much manœuvring, he tipped a wink to Tom and proposed that the stranger should play a game with their crack man.

"I don't mind," said the man. "It's a long time since I threw a ring."

They looked at each other wisely. A long time no doubt—if he had a patch in the seat of his trousers.

Jim Manning took the slate to mark the score. He wasn't going to show he was afraid.

"Two hundred and one," said Tom, "and play out to the number."

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"Two hundred and one," said the stranger.

There had never been a game seen like it in the "Momedan's Head." Tom Shire was reckoned the best hand at Ring'em in that part of the Downs, but this medium-sized, dark man, whom none had ever seen in that part of the world before, was a marvel.

"You get just short of the number," Sam had whispered in Tom's ear, "and then you hold 'un there—keep missin' 'em—while Jack Honey's gone on his bike to Mavant. The constable'll be here inside an hour to get 'im."

"But how do we know he's got the patch?" whispered Tom.

"We'll see to that," said Sam, "time you get him well goin' tryin' to ring that last number."

The game started, and in the first hand the stranger had a wash-out.

"Never mind," they said with amiable encouragement. "You stick it, mate. The board's strange to 'ee."

There was never such politeness heard at the "Momedan's Head."

Then Tom took the rings and scored twenty-seven. Jim Manning wrote it down in chalk on the slate.

"Duck plays twenty-seven," he said, and winked at the young stockman.

"What are you winkin' at?" asked the stranger.

"I never winked!" said Jim tremblingly.

It was again the stranger's hand, and from that moment they saw the game which will be remembered at the "Momedan's Head" for all time. In the next hand he scored forty-six. The rings rattled up against the board and stuck there as if they had been glued. In five hands he wanted but fifteen. Tom Shire was nowhere in it. And it was then, in the last throw when he had scored a thirteen with his first throw and held five more rings to get his two, that Sam Joliff, who bears a record for bravery to this day, lifted the tail of the stranger's long coat as he threw the rings.

There was never a patch at all. It was a new pair of trousers, as good a pair of trousers and even better than the bailiff wore at Squire Woods'.

Sam Joliff let the tail of his coat fall, and with the fourth ring the stranger scored his two. He threw the remaining rings on the table, and, raising his glass, he swallowed the rest of his pint.

"Well," said Tom Shire, "that's the best beating ever I had. I thought as how I could throw a ring, but I can't throw a ring like that. Have a pint, mate?"

"Don't mind if I do," said the stranger, and, in answer to the bell, Mrs. Corder came in.

"Pint for me and this gentleman, Mrs. Corder."

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"What, have you finished?" she exclaimed.

"Finished," they said. "He done it in six throws."

Sam Joliff whispered in her ear, and she went out.

"What's that whispering about?" asked the stranger sharply.

They laughed. First Sam, then Tom, then the young stockman. When Mrs. Corder returned with the pint glasses the room was a rouse of laughter again.

"It's like this, mate," said Sam. He began his tale about the escape of the criminal lunatic.

"Killed his wife and his sister—"

"Sister-in-law," corrected Mrs. Corder.

"Sister-in-law, and strangled his father—"

"With a boot-lace," added Mrs. Corder.

"With a boot-lace. Well—we had the description of him from the Mavant constable—was something like you, with a patch in the seat of his trousies. Don't mind tellin' you we was in two ways of thinking when you come into the room. So we set you on to play a game with Tom there, thinking it 'ud take you all your time to make a score, while one of our boys was going over full pelt on his bicycle to Mavant. That's right, isn't it, Mrs. Corder?"

And Mrs. Corder said it was gospel right.

"Well, when we sees you winning like that, just to make sure, if you understand my manner of speaking, I lifts up the tail of your coat as you was throwing them last rings, and, of course, we sees—there ain't no patch in your trousies at all." He laughed. "They're new trousies!" He roared with laughter. They all laughed. The stranger threw back his head and laughed with them. They were still laughing as he swallowed his pint and went to the door. He was still laughing with them as he said good night.

They heard him laughing as he ran up the lane. A silence fell on them as they listened. He was still laughing, laughing aloud, laughing alone, as he ran like a bounding hare—up into the hills.

* * *

THE RHINOCEROS

The rhino is a homely beast,
For human eyes he's not a feast.
Farewell, farewell, you old rhinoceros,
I'll stare at something less prepoceros.

OGDEN NASH

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TWO BY TWO

Marriage, said the philosopher, is a tie which hope makes beautiful

The handsome chambermaid is gone from the inn, and I have the prospect of seeing my excellent wife very soon . . .

I passed a delightful day yesterday. After breakfasting with Paoli, and worshipping at St. Paul's, I dined tête-à-tête with my charming Mrs. Stuart, of whom you have read in my journal . . . We talked with unreserved freedom, as we had nothing to fear; we were *philosophical*, upon honour,—not deep, but feeling; we were pious; we drank tea, and bid each other adieu as finely as romance paints. She is my wife's dearest friend; you see how beautiful our intimacy is . . .

There is a Miss Silverton in the Fly with me, an amiable creature, who has been in France. I can unite little fondnesses with perfect conjugal love.

JAMES BOSWELL, *in a letter, May*, 1775

Summing Up

Woman wants monogamy;
Man delights in novelty.
Love is woman's moon and sun;
Man has other forms of fun.
Woman lives but in her lord;
Count to ten, and man is bored.
With this the gist and sum of it,
What earthly good can come of it?

DOROTHY PARKER

Wicked as Shee is

This night my wife had a painfull night of her foote, which troubled mee so that sleepe went from mee. Wherupon sundry wicked worldly thoughts came in my head, and, namely, a question whether I should live with my wife or noe, if shee continued so wicked as shee is; wherupon I ris and prayd to God to direct mee a right.

CAPTAIN ADAM EYRE, *Diary, August*, 1647

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Talk of the Devil

. . . My neighbour Stroud's wife in Westminster . . . as she was basting his roast (for he was a cook) after he had newly come from the tavern upon Sunday evening, she grew hotter and hotter against him, having hell and the devil in her mouth, to whom she often bequeathed him. The staring husband having heard her a great while with silence, at last answered, " I prithee, sweetheart, do not talk so much to me of the devil, because I know he will do me no hurt, for I have married his kinswoman."

JAMES HOWELL, 1594–1666,
Letters of Ho-Eliana

One By One

All along this country it was very frequent to meet with men that had had from five or six, to fourteen or fifteen wives ; nay, and some more . . . There was a farmer, who was then living with the five and twentieth wife, and his son, who was but about 35 years old, had already had about fourteen . . .

The reason, as a merry fellow told me, who said he had had about a dozen and a half of wives (tho' I found afterwards he fibb'd a little) was this ; That they being bred in the marshes themselves, and season'd to the place, did pretty well with it ; but that they always went up into the hilly country for a wife: That . . . when they came out of their native air into the marshes among the fogs and damps, there they presently chang'd their complexion, got an ague or two, and seldom held it above half-a-year or a year at the most. And then, said he, we go to the uplands again, and fetch another.

DANIEL DEFOE, 1660–1731,
Tour through England and Wales

Catch ! —

Eaper Weaper, chimbley-sweeper,
Had a wife but couldn't keep her,
Had annover, didn't love her,
Up the chimbley he did shove her.

Author unknown

— As Catch Can

"And yet," said Lady Marney, " I would just as soon be married for my money as for my face."

BENJAMIN DISRAELI, 1804–1881, *Sybil*

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The Perfect Wife

She commandeth her husband in any equal matter by constant obeying him. She never crosseth her husband in the springtide of his anger, but stays till it is ebbing water. And then mildly she argues the matter, not so much to condemn him, as to acquit herself . . .

THOMAS FULLER, 1608–1661, *The Holy State*

Conversation Piece

" Only last year I knew a person, a married woman, very much admired," sinking her voice modestly, " who had reason to know that a man she met constantly in society was very much in love with her. He was in her opera-box every evening, met her at every party she went to, and passed half his mornings at her house . . . and without the least hesitation, without a thought of the inconvenience and the trouble, she set off to Cornwall, and passed a whole week there with the most tiresome old aunt in the world. This at once proved to the man he had no chance, and he withdrew immediately, and affected a passion for someone else. Now, what do you think of that ? "

" Why, that there never was anything half so absurd . . . That grand action of a sudden rush to Cornwall must have flattered him amazingly ; it showed she was obliged to go to the Land's End for safety. No, whenever I hear any of that cant about the difficult position of a married woman with her lovers, I know exactly what to think of her; I think her a good-for-nothing woman."

EMILY EDEN, 1797–1869,
The Semi-attached Couple

Last Word

Here lies my husbands ; One, Two, Three :
Dumb as men ever could wish to be.
As for my Fourth, well, praise be God
He bides for a little above the sod.
But his wits being weak and his eyeballs dim,
Heav'n speed at last I'll wear weeds for him.
Thomas, John, Henry, were these three's names
And to make things tidy, I adds his—James.

Epitaph, from Ding Dong Bell, by WALTER DE LA MARE

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MONSIEUR NOÉ

"The explanation stares one in the face," said Madame

by ANTHONY STEVEN

IF I had not heard Professor Berthot's series of lectures on comparative psychology, I do not pretend that I would be questioning, even at this late stage, the popular explanation of Monsieur Noé's strange state of mind.

I am the village schoolmaster in a southern region of Algeria, and last year I attended a teachers' summer course at the École Normale in Bouzarea. It was here that the Professor lectured.

So deeply did he impress me, that I have since devoted a great deal of my spare time to the study of this absorbing subject, and it is because of the extensive reading I have done that I am able to advance an altogether more plausible interpretation of the happenings of the past few months.

I have said nothing to my friends. They have never heard of Professor Berthot, and they would imagine me to be talking through my hat. Yet it is the Noé affair which tonight has brought them all together.

From my corner table in the Bar Pigale I can watch them without fear of interruption, except perhaps from Simone, and at the moment she is helping Madame Ramera behind the zinc-topped counter.

There is certainly a large crowd. They have been drinking steadily for an hour or more, and now the rising hum of their conversation does much to drown the drumming of the rain on the tin roof.

If I were to ask any one of them their opinion—even the Notary, whose broad back is towards me, or the Curé, whose face shows like a rosy moon above the former's shoulder—it would be indistinguishable from that of their companions.

"But my poor friend, it is as plain as the nose on your face! Aristide Noé has the desert madness."

As an explanation, this sounds rational enough. Our village lies close to the desert, and in summer the intense heat has been known to make quite normal people behave in the most peculiar fashion. If they are badly affected, we say that they have "desert

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madness "—although it would probably be more accurate to describe them as suffering from a nervous breakdown.

Yet however likely such a thing may seem at first sight, I am certain in my own mind that this is *not* what has happened to Aristide Noé. To begin with, the facts hardly fit. He came to the region a great many years ago, and it is difficult to imagine him succumbing to its rigours at this stage. Furthermore, the first evidence we have of his derangement dates from the cool of the year—a point which seems conveniently to have escaped people's notice.

He lives in a remote farmstead some miles from the village. There, with his old woman, his three sallow-skinned, ill-favoured sons, and a handful of half-starved Berber tribesmen, he raises sheep which are marketed in the coastal towns far away across the mountains to the north.

Visitors have never been encouraged, and all we ever see of the family is when one of them drives down to the village in a dilapidated Peugeot to buy stores and collect the mail. That has normally been once a week. Latterly, their visits have been less frequent.

My interest in the old man was instinctive, and at the start had nothing to do with his odd biblical name, the dreary wilderness in which he preferred to seclude himself, nor even the animosity he plainly bore the world at large.

Nothing happened to justify my interest until the arrival of the timber in January. I remember the event with great clearness, although at the time I did not recognize its significance.

It was New Year's Day, and my thirtieth birthday. I had to buy some stamps. The air blew cool and sweet as I crossed the square, and above me the palm fronds moved lazily against the silver-blue of the sky. By the fountain some children were playing hop-scotch. Old Madame Baudin sat in her customary place at the entrance to the post office, knitting busily. She is very deaf now, and so she lets her niece, Simone, do most of the work; but as I passed, she lowered her needles for an instant. In that way she salutes her friends.

I pushed my way through the bead curtain into the dim interior. Simone, who not only registers the mail and sells the stamps, but has to operate the switchboard for all incoming and outgoing calls, was taking a telegram. I rested my elbows on the counter.

"Oui . . . oui . . . d'accord . . . oui, monsieur . . . entendu . . ."

The earphones were perched on her honey-coloured hair. I could see the movement of her slender wrist as she wrote down the message in her large childish hand. When it was finished, she read it back. It was to Monsieur Noé. I could not avoid overhearing.

"*Timber arrives Aumale railhead Monday, 3rd January,*" ran

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the telegram, "*Arrange collection.*" There was some name in signature, but I have forgotten what it was.

"That's strange," I said. Simone pulled off the earphones. There was a mischievous smile on her face.

"What's strange?"

"Old Noé wanting timber."

"You had no business to listen in."

"I know I hadn't, but it's strange, just the same."

The Noés are a miserly family, and timber is a costly item.

"Perhaps he wants to build a hen-coop."

"Or a cage for those three apes," I suggested unkindly.

Simone gave me a reproving look.

"The Noé boys aren't so bad."

"How do you know?" I demanded jealously. She leaned across the counter and kissed me softly on the mouth.

"Happy birthday," said Simone.

Three days later the timber started to pass through the village on its way to the Noé farm.

The lorries bringing it from Aumale, thirty miles to the north of us, were laden with heavy baulks and stacked high with lengths of planking. It took them several journeys, over a space of days, to complete the job. So much timber must have been worth a fortune.

For weeks afterwards we wondered what old Noé could be up to. One or two enthusiastic spies made their way to a point overlooking the farmstead. They could only report that the timber had been laid on a small plateau behind the main group of buildings; there was no activity so far to suggest for what purpose it was to be used.

The days went by, and the sun rose higher and higher in the sky. People's minds turned in upon themselves. Curiosity in the Noé project waned. Nobody could muster the energy to go spying any more. We drank or we smoked or we made love. If we had to, we worked.

One evening in July, I was sitting in the Bar Pigale, playing dominoes with Louis Masson. It was breathlessly hot. Madame Ramera, who has run the bar since her husband's death, stood watching us, her hands on her hips. The cotton frock she wore clung damply to her great shapeless body. The glossy black hair was scraped back from her handsome head and pinned in a knot on the nape of her neck. She has fine dark eyes, and a smile of quite dazzling whiteness.

"I hear you were thrown out of the 'Tendre Logis' last night," she said to Louis.

"I was drunk," he replied simply. "One of the girls complained.

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You know what old Madame Ruad is ! "

Madame Ramera chuckled. Louis is a nice, gay lad of whom she approves. He works as a linesman with the telegraphic service, and is billeted in the village.

" Well, she did quite right," declared Madame Ramera firmly. " If *she* didn't take care of her girls, I'd like to know who would."

Louis appealed to me, a grin on his snub-nosed face, and Madame Ramera laughed. It was deep and pleasant to hear. A few years ago, before her figure went, she must have been quite a girl.

Jean Nattier, from the Gendarmerie, strolled in.

" By the way," he called to Louis, " Simone would like to see you. The line's down somewhere between here and Aumale."

This was bad news for Louis. The thought of having to check the line northwards for fifteen miles or so in the broiling weather we were enduring just now was enough to make a man weep.

" Let's go and have a word with Simone," I suggested.

It was like an oven in the square. An Arab, muffled up in his burnous, lay dozing on the steps of the fountain. Nearby a stray cur was investigating an unemptied refuse bin.

In the post office it was less oppressive. Simone looked at Louis with sympathy in her grey eyes. The line *was* down.

" Look," I told Louis, " don't go out today. There's a chance the damage is the Aumale end, and they'll send someone out to patch it up. If it isn't fixed by the morning, you can get away to an early start while it's still cool."

The idea appealed to Louis.

" I might even come along with you."

" Yes, but I've only got a motorbicycle," he protested.

Simone supported me.

" It's a fine idea ! " she cried. " You can ride pillion and watch the cable for a break while Louis drives."

And so it was agreed.

Next morning the line was still dead, and Louis and I were away before sun-up. It was deliciously fresh. My head felt clear for the first time in weeks.

The sound of the engine shattered the sleeping street, and the houses fell away like pale ghosts in the dawn. We rode northwards through a land sun-charred and dreary. No green of any kind relieved the eye. Here and there, formations of lava and sandstone stuck like white and red bones through the seared skin of soil.

Our pace was leisurely, and I do not suppose we had covered more than six miles when I spotted the break. In fact, it was not a break but a cut. The work of Bedouins, Louis said. It was a habit they had. The penalty if they are caught is severe, but if they need the wire—to make a bangle for a wife or to repair some object

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—they do not hesitate to cut it from the line.

Louis wasted no time. He wanted to complete the job before it got hot. I watched him idly for a moment or two, for there was nothing I could do to help. I lit a cigarette and decided to take a stroll.

It was only then that I realized where I was. If I climbed to the top of the hill at the base of which we now were, I would get a clear view of the Noé farmstead. The going looked rough, but there was not more than half-a-mile to cover.

Remembering the timber, all my old curiosity flared up again. When I told Louis, now perched comfortably at the top of a telegraph pole, where I was going, he only grunted in reply. He was holding a pair of pliers between his teeth.

I had been climbing for ten minutes or so, when the light strengthened, and I saw the sun pushing upward like a hot coin beyond the rim of a table-topped mountain.

When at length I reached the point where I could overlook the farm, I had to shade my eyes to observe what was happening below me.

A thin thread of smoke rose from the roof of the farm, but there was no other sign of life. I shifted my gaze to where the timber had been stacked. It had all but vanished. Where it had gone to presented no mystery.

There was a slight ground mist, and the valley was still deep in shadow, and for these reasons I at first imagined the structure rising from the centre of the plateau to be no more than a large house or barn.

As I watched, a brilliant shaft of light struck downward through a cleft in the hills, illuminating the whole area of the farmstead, and I could see everything clearly. I remember crying out in astonishment. The building, instead of resting upon normal foundations, was encased by a formidable, barge-like hull.

Monsieur Noé had built himself an ark.

There was a queer feeling in my stomach. I sank down on my haunches, and lit another cigarette.

But if there was a dreamlike unreality about the scene before me, it did not fade. Here, in this parched dust-bowl a few miles north of the great desert, lapped by sunlight, was a boat straight out of the Old Testament.

The tobacco burned my tongue. I took a firm hold on my fancy. My studies have taught me the importance of the rational approach and I experienced a deep thrill of triumph as I came to terms with this phenomenon. My instinct had not erred. Later, perhaps, others would pass judgment on Aristide Noé. For my part, I was content to draw my own conclusions.

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One thing was evident. Beside the abnormality which gripped his mind, the symptoms of melancholia and hysteria which I had detected among my neighbours paled into insignificance.

He was a victim of paranoia in the grand tradition. On this score my months of study could leave me in no doubt. All my reading had failed to reveal so classical an example of a man suffering from delusions of grandeur—of the paranoiac's tendency to confuse his identity with that of some famous or notorious person. Yet I was left with the sensation that here was something larger than life.

There, in the morning brightness, I saw with cold detachment the logical sequence of events as they must have been: the first aberration (and the reasons for this one could only guess) which had made society his enemy, and then, the burning conviction that he was a man apart, an original, a tool of destiny. The odd coincidence of his name canalized the trend of his thoughts. He became Father Noé not only in name but in deed. Fact mounted upon fact. He had three sons. His only glimpse of the world beyond the valley was of our village. We *were* the world, and to his jaundiced eyes a conveniently wicked one. The voice of his dementia seemed to speak with the authority of God. Soon the deluge would come. It was time to build his ark.

I scrambled to my feet. The ark was built now. To get so much timber, I reflected, he must have raised a heavy mortgage on the farm.

"Poor devil," I muttered to myself, and then: "Poor devils." His family were in this, too. That was a point. Going back to fetch Louis, I wondered why they had co-operated. Or his Berber servants, for that matter. The ark was obviously the work of many hands. The answer, I decided, lay in the old man's fanaticism. He would not be the first in his state to produce mass hysteria among his followers.

It was mid-day when Louis and I returned to the village. I had pretended to share his simple-minded astonishment, and I enjoyed hearing him retail our discovery to a sceptical audience at Madame Ramera's bar. In the end they believed us. It was the best story that had ever been told in the village. The kind you could sink your teeth into. A party of spies who went out that evening confirmed what we had said. It was no mirage.

From that day onwards, if a member of the Noé family showed his head in the village, he was pilloried unmercifully.

I kept my own counsel. I was in two minds as to whether I should write to Professor Berthot, but decided, temporarily, against doing so. I was jealous of my knowledge, and desperately keen to see what would happen if Aristide Noé were allowed to pursue his

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delusions to their logical conclusion.

By August, as far as the village was concerned, the joke was wearing a bit thin. The only important thing in life seemed to be how to keep cool and how to avoid the slightest unnecessary labour. To hell with Monsieur Noé and his confounded ark.

Less and less was seen of the family, which, in view of village opinion, was understandable, and I have no doubt that the whole business would have slipped comfortably into the backs of people's minds until the return of the cool weather, had not a series of occurrences during the past few days gradually linked themselves in the public mind with the Noés' activities.

Livestock began to disappear.

First it was the Curé's shabby old rooster and two pullets which he kept in his back garden. The Curé shook his head sadly and accepted the theft philosophically. He assured me that it was undoubtedly the work of an Arab with a large family to feed. I made no comment.

On the following day, the Notary's pedigree retriever bitch, a faithful and sentimental creature which had never been known to stray, vanished. The Notary's wife was distracted. She had had the retriever sent all the way to a fashionable kennel near Algiers to be covered, and Pierette was expected to whelp within a fortnight.

The Notary, whose sleep was being made to suffer as a consequence, summoned Jean Nattier and sternly ordered him to recover Pierette on pain of being reported to police headquarters for inefficiency.

Poor Jean, purple in the face, told me of this savage injustice over a *fine à l'eau* at Madame Ramera's. I was about to make some soothing reply, when a long military car roared down the street in a cloud of dust. It pulled up, and a sharp-nosed, sour-faced officer in the uniform of the Spahis clambered out.

"More trouble," muttered Jean bitterly, and went out to meet him.

Madame Ramera was polishing the glasses.

"It's all very simple," she told me. "The explanation stares one in the face." I looked innocent.

"It is the work of the Noés," she went on. "They want to stock up their ark."

That Madame Ramera, who was a clear-thinking woman, should arrive at this conclusion, though for reasons other than my own, was not surprising. I said, still innocently, "Then that makes them criminals as well as lunatics."

She gave me a level look with her fine eyes.

"By their standards, they are neither lunatics nor criminals."

Before I could be certain whether this remark was as profound

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as it at first appeared, Jean came back, and I heard the sound of the car departing. He sank on to a chair.

"Now it's horses."

"Horses?"

"A stallion and a brood mare. Vanished from the picket lines at Aumale last night. Some talk of their having been seen heading this way."

The idea that the Noés were somehow implicated began, from this stage, to take shape in the public imagination. But the theft of horses from Aumale was something too distant and impersonal to precipitate any communal action.

It was not until this morning, two days later, when the news broke that old Mahomet Ali's two Biskra camels had been stolen during the night, that there was something in the nature of an outcry.

When I stepped out into the street after breakfast, it was to encounter a Jean Nattier I scarcely recognized, so businesslike was the set of his face. He got off his bicycle.

"Where are you off to, Jean?"

"To Aristide Noé's place."

I experienced a pang of uneasiness. He should not beard that household single-handed.

"Is it reasonable to go out there by yourself?"

His jaw jutted with a pugnacity so alien to his kindly face, that I had difficulty in restraining a smile.

"Thank you," he replied curtly, "I am not anticipating trouble."

I wished him luck. Little puffs of white dust squirted up from beneath the tyres of the velo as he pedalled away.

It was late this afternoon that I saw him again. He came up to my room and threw himself on my bed. He looked worn out. All the determination had been wiped from his face. I was not surprised. Quite apart from the fatigue of the journey, there was a terrible tension in the air. I was afraid the sirocco was going to blow from the desert.

Jean needed the drink I gave him. He set down the tumbler and leaned towards me, laying a hairy hand on my forearm. It felt soft and moist. It was trembling.

"They're mad," he whispered, "Old Noé and his gang. They're insane."

I made no reply.

"Listen," he went on, "I went up there this morning, and what happens? The old devil meets me with a gun in his hands. I tried to get him to see reason. Never opened his trap. They

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locked me in an out-house. I only broke out an hour ago."

"So!"

"I got back here as fast as I could. But that's not the point. You'll never believe me. The place is like a zoological gardens. Never saw so many animals. All in pens. And what do you think? They were getting them into that damned house-boat of theirs!"

I knew then that the game had been played to the limit. Old Noé had taken his mania to the wilderness, but it had not prevented him trespassing against society. With less reluctance than I would have imagined, I knew that it was time to intervene.

Maybe Jean thought that I doubted him.

"What I'm telling you's the truth!" he cried. "Listen, old friend, I'm not an imaginative man. But that set-up gives me the creeps."

"We'll get the Notary and the Curé, and have a council of war."

"That's a fine idea, old friend. This nonsense must stop."

The council of war was a great success. Practically the whole village flocked to the Bar Pigale. Madame Ramera did a roaring trade. In the middle of it we heard a faint outcry down the village street, but nobody took any notice until Madame Ruad came bursting in at the door. She looked a terrible sight. Her black hair was streaming, and the rouge stood out in patches on her cheeks. Her great eyes blazed.

"Ay-yi-yi!" she wailed, "Ay-yi-yi . . ."

Louis Masson clapped a burly arm about her shoulders.

"Now, ma," he said, "tell us what the trouble is."

"It is those wicked Noé boys!" screamed Madame Ruad, and at mention of the name everyone stopped talking. Madame Ruad struggled for breath.

"Never, never have they been to my house before, and now suddenly they are come, and then—Whoosh! They are gone. In a car. But not alone. They have stolen my three best girls. Julie, and Lima, and the Naïl child."

Far away came a noise like the rumble of artillery, and a sudden current of air went rippling over the striped awning outside the Bar.

"That settles it!" boomed the Notary, gathering to himself the undisputed mantle of leadership. "Any man with a gun, fetch it and report back here. We will proceed at once to the Noé farm. This affair must be settled immediately."

For a moment nobody stirred. The hush that fell then will always stay in my memory because it was broken not by our own movements or our voices, but by a solemn din like drum-taps on

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the awning. Then it sounded as though all the devils in hell were dancing on the tin roof of the Bar.

Jean Nattier walked back from the open door.

"Well," he said, "We can't go out in this. We'll have to wait till the rain stops."

"Rain in August?" muttered the Notary stupidly, "It can't be. It never rains in August."

But that was three hours ago, and it is still raining. I have been to look at the sky. It is dark purple and yellowish. There is lightning playing on the mountains. A small river is running down the street. Nobody has been able to leave the Bar, and now there is quite a party spirit. It is refreshingly cool. Simone has joined me at my table in the corner. She thinks that I am writing my school reports, but instead I have set down this account of Monsieur Noé's delusion. She touches my hand.

"Tomorrow," she smiles, "there will be green shoots everywhere. It will look like green mist on the sand. And then the day after there will be little purple flowers. It is always like that after the first rains."

The Notary, his importance taken from him, has been drinking like a giant. His hand is on the Curé's shoulder.

"It never rains in August," he says. "In thirty years I have never known it rain in August. The rains down here never start until the beginning of October."

The Curé looks towards the open door a little unhappily. A swarm of flies buzzes round the naked bulb which lights the room. Louis, who is comforting his old friend, Madame Ruad, glances across.

"If this goes on all night," he says, "we'll be under water tomorrow."

Madame Ramera rolls over to the Curé and fills his glass from the brandy bottle.

"All night?" she bawls. "The last time this happened it went on for forty days and forty nights. Didn't it, Father?"

* * *

SUCCESS STORY

We have just learned of an editor who started with nothing twenty years ago and retired recently with a comfortable fortune of £50,000.

This was acquired through industry, economy, conscientious effort, indomitable perseverance, and the death of an uncle who left him £49,990.

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EASY MONEY

One glance, and then she knew

by NORMAN EDWARDS

"DOIN' anythin', kid?"

"No."

"Like a drink?"

"Don't mind."

"Come on then."

She was very young. He was young, too; but he looked old. Horribly old. Old with the grey years that had almost devoured him. But he had an air. He walked springily; and she thought of him as a debonair feller: you know—he had a way with him. Self-assurance. That was what she fancied about him. His self-assurance.

The pub he took her to was small and dingy, but warm and friendly; and the gaudily arranged pile of thick sandwiches on a shelf behind the bar caught her eye and made her suddenly aware of her hunger. He noticed.

"Hungry?"

"Yes."

Out of one corner of his mouth—a cigarette dangled from the other—he gave his order to the barmaid, and then turned to her. "Whisky, Gin, Beer?"

"Gin."

"Neat?"

"And ginger."

She felt his fingers on her arm, and she moved beneath their pressure. And suddenly she was seated next to him on a hard wooden bench, in a rather dim alcove at the end of the bar. But the light was good enough for her to take him in. One glance, then she knew. Oh, he wasn't bad looking: tall, too; and well dressed. Smart. But funny eyes. Bit of a squint? Maybe. Age? Oh, anything between twenty and forty. You never could tell—when you met a spiv. And he was a spiv all right. And how!

She felt her stomach turn as someone banged a plate of thick cut sandwiches in front of her, and then a tumbler with gin in it. Double gin. Cripes! He was doing her proud. Money. He was in the money.

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She bit savagely into one of the sandwiches, and then swallowed so suddenly that she felt like choking. My God, I'm hungry, she thought. And then she watched him pour a little ginger ale into her glass, and she drank thirstily. My God, I needed that, she thought.

He didn't say much. Hardly opened his mouth, except when he drank, or lit another cigarette. He was a chain smoker. And fags at three and sixpence for twenty! Oh, he was in the money all right. She could tell. Smell money, she could. Smell it a mile off. And God, how she could do with some! That something landlady . . .

But she was anxious. Well, not exactly anxious: puzzled. He was a spiv. No getting away from that. And spivs didn't spend money on the likes of her. No ruddy fear they didn't! Other way round. But what was she fussing about? She was ravenous. She was broke. She . . .

She took another sandwich. And another. And when he ordered more gin, she drank it. And when the sandwiches were finished, and a third double gin was making her glow with warmth and well-being, she accepted his offer of a cigarette with voluptuous satisfaction. Life wasn't so bad. Except when you were hungry—and broke.

Half an hour later, when she was slightly drunk, he started to talk business. She listened with exaggerated attention, because half her brain was stupefied with drink; but the other half—so she thought to herself, with a smug giggle of self-satisfaction—was very wide awake. Very! He was a queer cove; but there were no flies on her. He was in the money. Obviously. And she guessed he'd pay well—for whatever it was he wanted—if she didn't seem too eager. So she listened aloofly. Let him do the talking.

She ran a broken comb through her Ginger Rogers hair-do, and then tilted forward, elbows on the table, and looked at him attentively as he explained. She was short sighted, and she wanted to watch his eyes, so she leaned well over the table. And as she watched, she grew more and more puzzled. He wasn't interested in her. He didn't look at her breasts—which were good, and she knew it—and he didn't lean forward, or show any signs of amorousness. Rather the opposite. She pouted, blew smoke in his face, and felt rather inclined to tell him to go and . . .

But wait. What was he saying? Talking. Talking fast, too. She'd better listen.

At last he finished. "Think about it, kid," he advised. He got up and lounged across to the bar to order another round. She watched him, and thought about his offer. And the more she thought the more convinced she was that there was no catch in it.

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And she was fly, she was. You'd have to get up early in the morning to catch her.

But as he came back to her, a glass in each hand, she knew that her thoughts were wandering. Now, she wasn't quite sure if she'd understood exactly what he wanted her to do. Damn! She was getting tight. Well, not tight, but muzzy.

She lit a cigarette from the glowing butt of the one she'd half smoked, and peered at him through the haze with short-sighted eyes.

"Say it again."

"It's easy. Want you to come with me, and a friend of mine, to Parkham Crescent—and deliver a letter."

"Why don't you do it yourself?"

"'Cos I want you to."

"An' I get two quid—just for that?"

"Just for that."

"You nuts?"

"No."

"That—for—two quid!"

"Easy money, kid."

"Too easy."

"What you mean?"

"Where's the catch?"

"There's no catch."

"This friend of yours. Where's he come in?"

"Listen. My friend has had a row with his sweetie-pie. She's a housemaid. A skivvy. See?"

"No. Go on."

"Works at a house in Parkham Crescent. Big house. She's up-stage. Quarrel, see? With George . . ."

"George your friend?"

"Yeah."

"Go on."

"George is kind of crazy about her, see? But she won't meet him. Won't answer his letters."

"Why?"

"I dunno. Some quarrel, see? But when George calls on her—he has to call late—at the back door, she won't open it. Door's got a ruddy window in it, an' she looks out to see who's knocking. See?"

"She alone?"

"Yes. Tonight. Family away."

"What's your pal George want me to do?"

"You're a gal. She won't suspect you."

"Suspect?"

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"Y'know what I mean."

"I don't. If I give her this letter, and she opens the door 'cos I'm a gal, what goes on?"

"George and me will be standin' by. Soon as she opens the door, an' takes the letter, you can scram, see?"

"You American?"

"No."

"And you and George?"

"Up to George. All he wants is a chance to make it up. Talk to her, see? You know—get her to come off it. Make it up. See?"

"You payin' two quid for *that*?"

"No. George is. He's got dough."

"When do I git the two quid?"

"One now—if you're on. Other quid when you ring the bell. Playin' ball?"

She thought hard. She tried to find the catch in it. But the more she thought the more certain she was that she'd be a fool to chuck away such easy money. After all, this George—if he was in love with a girl, and he'd got dough to chuck around—well, guys in love were awful suckers. She nodded her head. "O.K.," she said, "I'm on."

"Good. Here's the half. An' don't try any funny business."

She slipped the one pound note into her bag. He got up. Bit flabby for a spiv, she thought.

"We're cutting it fine," he said. "Let's go."

"Now?"

"Yeah. Said I'd find someone to help; and I said I'd meet him at ten o'clock. It's five to now. Let's go."

In the darkness of the mews behind Parkham Crescent, George was waiting. He greeted his friend inaudibly. He did not speak to her; but she felt his hand on her arm. He guided her in the darkness half a dozen yards over the cobble stones, and then stopped close to a door which, she dimly saw, had a small glass pane inset in its wooden front. His grip on her arm relaxed; but her hand was guided upwards to an electric bell push set flatly in the wall at the left hand side of the door. And as one finger was impelled to the button, she felt something pressed into the palm of her hand. She sensed by the feel of it what it was: the letter. A voice whispered in her ear. George's voice. "You got it?"

"Yes."

"Wait until she opens the door. Then give it her. Say it's from 'her ladyship.' Understand?"

"Yes."

"Ask if there's an answer. When she opens the letter, and starts to read it—scram. Understand?"

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"Yes."

"Good. Now—ring."

She pressed firmly on the bell push; and a few seconds afterwards the square-cut window-pane became alive with light. She could see through the glass into a long passage; and coming along the passage was a girl. She guessed the girl to be about her own age. Not bad looking, she thought. But sloppy. No style. No make-up. Bad hair-do. She didn't think much of George's taste in girl friends. And as she thought that, she realized that George and his friend had flattened themselves against the wall, parallel with the door; when the door opened it was unlikely that they'd be seen. Cute, she thought.

A face peered at her through the glass pane. She smiled—and, anxious to give full value for the two quid—she held up the letter to the window-pane, and smiled, and then nodded.

It worked. No hesitation. The door was opened. "What is it?" asked the girl who had opened the door.

"Letter from her ladyship."

"Her ladyship! But she's . . ."

George's voice whispered in her ear. "Scram." And he pushed past her; but his friend was so close behind him that he collided with her, and she was forced forward. She stumbled over a step she did not know was there, and fell into the hall. And as she fell, the girl who had opened the door screamed.

George swore foully; but he kept his nerve: he shut the door quietly and carefully. And then he hit the girl who had screamed, just as she opened her mouth to scream again. She gasped, rolled over, and lay still.

George's friend was half sobbing. His loose lips dribbled. He was panic stricken. George shook him roughly; and then he turned to the girl who had carried the letter. "Why didn't you scram?" he said in a low voice. She shivered. There was menace in the voice.

"I . . . I tried to," she whispered, "but your friend barged into me, and . . ."

George looked her steadily in the eyes. "Shut up," he said. "You're in it, now. Keep your trap shut, or . . ."

The look on his face frightened her so much that she felt her knees give. She would have fallen again if he had not gripped her by both elbows and held her up against the wall. He shook her until her teeth rattled. "Snap out of it," he whispered. And as he spoke she knew that he was also listening—listening with concentrated intentness.

For at least a minute he held her like that—listening. Then gradually he relaxed, and the animal look on his face faded. He half turned to his friend. "Seems O.K.," he muttered. "No one

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heard her "—and he jerked his head towards the girl who lay on the floor. "The bitch wasn't heard, Harry."

Harry was still very scared, but at George's words a little colour came back to his face, and his mouth stopped its convulsive movements. He swallowed hard, tried to speak, couldn't, and so nodded.

The three of them stood there, quite still, for another two minutes. It seemed longer than that to her: much longer; but at last George took his hands off her, and she leaned limply against the wall. There were tears running down her face now, but she made no noise: she just looked at George; and the terror in her eyes seemed to please him. A long red scar on his cheek bone twitched as he grinned briefly. "Know me again, kid. Won't forget me in a hurry?"

She moistened her lips with her tongue, but she couldn't articulate. He grinned again.

"Keep your trap shut," he said in such a low voice that she could hardly hear him. "Keep it shut—tight."

She managed to nod.

"Harry."

"Yes—George."

Harry's voice was a croak. He was still very shaken. "Keep an eye on her. I won't be long."

Harry nodded. He pulled a short length of rubber tubing from his pocket, drew in a long breath, and then moved over and stood next to the girl. She closed her eyes.

When she opened them again, George was moving slowly and quite noiselessly down the passage. He turned to the right and disappeared. Harry moved closer to her, and he looked at her, and then at the rubber cosh in his right hand. She understood.

The minutes dragged by. She slumped against the wall. She was all in. What with the drink she'd had in the pub, and the fright, she was all in. She wanted to sleep. She wanted to slide down on to the floor. But she dare not. Fear kept her from moving. She was so frightened she hardly dared breathe.

Later—it seemed hours later—George came back softly along the passage. His scar showed up lividly on his cheek, and his eyes shone with excitement. "Got it," he whispered to his friend; and something flashed in his hand. She thought it was a necklace, but she couldn't be sure. Jewels, anyway. God, she was in a mess, she thought. Couple of thieves, that's what they were. And if that girl's screams had been heard . . .

George gently opened the door and looked out to right and left. "All clear," he whispered.

And then Harry pointed to the girl on the floor.

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"Hasn't moved," he muttered, his voice shaky and broken. "Have a look."

George swore softly under his breath and stooped down. And when he straightened up again there was an appalling look on his face. He looked at Harry, and nodded. Harry gasped, and his eyes bulged in his grey face. "You . . . hit too hard," he said, "Oh, God, you hit too hard."

George wiped a hand across his mouth. "So what," he said softly. "So what?"

"She dead?"

"Yes."

"Oh, my God!"

"So what?"

"It's . . . it's murder!"

"So what? We're safe. No one heard her. No one seen us."

"Let's . . . let's scram."

"Wait!"

Harry looked bad. His face was the colour of cigar ash, and his mouth was wet and twitching again.

"Let's go," he said, "let's go."

George nodded; and then he looked at the girl leaning against the wall.

"Know me again, kid, wouldn't you? Know the scar again, wouldn't you?"

She began to shake her head violently, because she saw the meaning in his eyes. And suddenly she found her voice again. "No," she croaked. "No, I wouldn't know you again, straight I wouldn't. No. No. No . . ."

But it was too late to convince him, for Harry had handed him the rubber cosh.

* * *

REFLECTED GLORY

Charles Spurgeon, the preacher, was taking a "sermon class" for students.

"When you speak of Heaven," he said, "let your face light up, let it be irradiated by a heavenly gleam, let your light shine with reflected glory. But when you speak of Hell—" He paused and thought. "Your ordinary faces will do," he said at length.

Told by JOHN AYE

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LIGHTS OUT

A time for love, and dream, and night's dark fantasy

He was never married, but kept women to reade to him when he was a-bed . . .

JOHN AUBREY, 1626-1697, *Brief Life of Sir Henry Lee*

Day's End

Night, rustling the grey grass, is at your door ;
Stir the coals quietly—then look once more
On the blue highroad, spread with mists that rise
From water-meads . . .
The Spring dusk dies
From your square window panes ; your firelight dips,
Tremblingly, to your jar of closed cowslips.
You can hear a horse tear the cool spring grass
At the road's edge, slowly—now his feet pass,
Stumbling, to his own field . . . And now, again,
The wind blows budded boughs against your pane.

" Rest now," the grass says, " rest "—and your coals part
To show the dreamlit caves of the fire's heart.
" Rest now," the grass says. " Rest," the blown trees sing . . .
Up the high road you hear the inn sign swing.

DOROTHY ROBERTS

Room-mates

I was now under the necessity of choosing an Icelandic bed, to which I soon repaired . . . The most of the family being in bed, raised themselves nearly erect, naked as they were, to behold the strange visitor. Though almost suffocated for want of air I should soon have fallen asleep, had it not been for an universal scratching that took place in all the beds in the room, which greatly excited my fears . . . At one period of the operation, the noise was paramount to that made by a groom in combing down his horses.

EBENEZER HENDERSON,
Journal of a Residence in Iceland, 1814-1815

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And so to Bed

Mr. Squeers yawned fearfully, and opined that it was high time to go to bed; upon which signal Mrs. Squeers and the girl dragged in a small straw mattress and a couple of blankets, and arranged them into a couch for Nicholas.

"We'll put you into your regular bedroom tomorrow, Nickleby," said Squeers. "Let me see! Who sleeps in Brooks's bed, my dear?"

"In Brooks's," said Mrs. Squeers, pondering. "There's Jennings, little Bolder, Graymarsh, and what's his name."

"So there are," rejoined Squeers. "Yes! Brooks is full."

"Full!" thought Nicholas. "I should think he was."

"There's a place somewhere I know," said Squeers; "but I can't at this moment call to mind where it is. However, we'll have that all settled tomorrow. Good night, Nickleby. Seven o'clock in the morning, mind."

"I shall be ready, sir," replied Nicholas. "Good night."

"I'll come in myself and show you where the well is," said Squeers. "You'll always find a little bit of soap in the kitchen window; that belongs to you . . . I don't know, I am sure, whose towel to put you on; but if you'll make shift with something tomorrow morning, Mrs. Squeers will arrange that."

Mr. Squeers then nudged Mrs. Squeers to bring away the brandy bottle, lest Nicholas should help himself in the night; and the lady having seized it with great precipitation, they retired together.

CHARLES DICKENS, 1812-1870, *Nicholas Nickleby*

Voice of My Beloved

I sleep, but my heart waketh:
it is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying,
Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled:
for my head is filled with dew,
and my locks with the drops of the night.

SONG OF SOLOMON

No Offence Intended

Waking this morning out of my sleep on a sudden, I did with my elbow hit my wife a great blow over her face and nose, which waked her with pain, at which I was sorry and to sleep again.

SAMUEL PEPYS, 1633-1703, *Diary*

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Ghoulies and Ghosties

I blame it all on the moon and a lobster . . .

When I drew back the bedroom curtains the moonlight printed itself in green on the floor. A proper Puckish night with the green wash over hill and field, a night for elfin horns and mushroom rings and strange scurryings in thicket and copse . . . Then, I suppose, I fell asleep.

Do you know what it is to awaken suddenly from deep sleep into instant wakefulness? I imagined that a cold hand had been passed over my face! It was so vivid that I dared not open my eyes because I felt that I would see the hand and—the thing to which it belonged . . .

If, I said to myself, I did not open my eyes and behave like a reasonable person I would lose all self-respect. On the word "three" I would look! One . . . *there was undoubtedly something horrible in the room* . . . two . . . *it might be leaning over the bed, for it seemed so cold and near* . . . th . . . *or perhaps the wardrobe door was slowly opening, or, much worse, slowly closing*—damn it! THREE! The moonlight lay across my face in a white bar, and the room was, of course, empty!

How supremely idiotic you feel in the morning when the sun shines and the postman is rapping down the street . . .

H. V. MORTON, *In Search of England*

Sleep, My Darling

Out in the dark something complains,
Is it the wild dove's purr?
And there a thing creeps, is it the rain
Eavesdropping near our door?
Then sleep, sleep, my darling—
Sleep until the bow-legged crows
Walk the fields of barley.

May nothing nose the gentle birds,
Abroad in the crawl of night,
Nor the cock, with wings upon his spurs,
Until the peep of light;
Then sleep to my long rocking;
Sleep as the little winds that sleep
All safely in God's pocket—
Yes, safely in God's pocket,
Sleep, my darling.

F. R. HIGGINS

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THE MOUSE

At last the kitten understood

by LIAM O'FLAHERTY

A BLACK kitten was playing in the sun. He was hitting a piece of brown paper with his fore-paws and pushing it along the grass near a circular flower bed. He struck it daintily, with one paw at a time, following it in quick rushes, noiselessly, with his body crouched against the short grass. The sharp sound made by the impact of his paws against the paper amused him.

Suddenly he felt a desire for violent movement. He struck the paper with both paws and held it securely. Then he stood up on his haunches and hurled it into the air. As it came down, he thrust forth his claws and struck at it savagely. There was a tearing sound as the claws pierced it. This excited him. He pretended to be frightened and ran away as fast as he could, with his tail half raised.

He ran half way round the flower bed. Then he pretended that there was an enemy in pursuit. He turned sharply in among the flowers. He hid himself among them and crouched. Now he felt savage and eager for a fight. The fur rose on his back. He made his body taut for a spring. He was already half-grown and developing the instincts of the hunter.

As nothing pursued him into his hiding place, he soon wearied of this game. The desire to fight gave way to a languorous pleasure in his surroundings. There was a delicious smell here. Flowers that were softer than his silken fur touched him on either side. The delicious smell and the softness of the flower petals made him want to caress something. He began to purr deeply and to push softly against the flowers. This excited him and he again felt the desire for violent movement. He rolled over, stretched himself and dragged his belly along the ground.

Suddenly he heard a cry and he sat up on his haunches. The cry was repeated. He rushed out of the flower bed in the direction of the sound and saw his mother coming down the sloping lawn from the corner of the house. She walked in a peculiar fashion, almost at a run, with her back bent and her head close to the ground. She had something in her mouth.

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The kitten stared at her in surprise and mewed. She saw him and came to a halt. She dropped what she was carrying and put her fore-paw on it. Then she raised her head slightly and called him once more. It was almost a growl, the sound that she made. Her teeth were bared to the end of her jaws and her tongue was hanging out, red and shining with moisture in the sunlight, as she mewed.

The kitten became very excited. He leaped into the air and galloped to his mother with arched tail. As he approached, she tapped the thing she had dropped on the ground, several times, gently, with her paw. The kitten came to a halt and crouched, watching the thing she had dropped.

It was a little brown mouse, which she had caught nibbling a crumb of cheese under the kitchen table. He was still uninjured, as she had not put her teeth into him; but he was stunned by fright and by the impact of her paws when she had pounced on him. He moved unconsciously in obedience to the cat's tapping on his haunches. He dragged himself along the grass for about six inches and then came to a halt once more, unable to go farther owing to the trembling of his body. His trembling was so minute that it was undiscernible, except his whiskers and his pointed snout, which jerked spasmodically with each convulsive intake of breath.

Now he lay almost on his side, with his enormous tail, like an exposed root, stretched out straight. His brown flanks and back were moist through contact with the cat's mouth. There the fur lay flat and indented by the pressure of the cat's teeth.

The kitten followed the mouse when the tiny animal began to move. Instead of reaching out with his curved paw and playing with him, as he would have done in the ordinary way, he ran around in a circle, disturbed and somewhat intimidated by a strange emotion. Then he threw himself sprawling on the grass and watched the long tail eagerly. It was like a string being drawn slowly. When the mouse halted, the kitten drew a little closer, reached out with his paw and touched the tail. The mouse crawled forward another inch and again lay still. Again the kitten touched the tail. This time the mouse did not move. The kitten looked at his mother and mewed plaintively. He was at a loss to explain this strange little animal that was pulling a string along the ground.

The mother cat had sat up on her haunches after pawing the mouse. She pretended to have no interest either in him or in the kitten. She began to lick her breast energetically. When the kitten mewed, she stopped licking herself and turned to the mouse once more. With a savage growl, she pounced on him, caught him in her mouth and threw him high into the air. Then she leaped into the air after him, caught him dexterously in her paws and fell to

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the ground with him, rolling over. Then she dropped him and patted him roughly on the haunches.

The mouse was roused from his stupor by the fierce cries, the violent movement through the air and the rough pressure of the cat's paws. As soon as he got loose he began to run, squealing. Now his fear was released and he was struggling frantically to escape.

The cat let him run a few yards, hoping the kitten would follow and pounce on him, in imitation of herself. The kitten, however, did not yet understand the game. He still feared the strange emotion roused in him by the smell of the brown body that was pulling the string-like tail. By force of habit, he followed the tail, pawing at it and bobbing his head from side to side.

The mouse began to gather speed. The cat leaped forward once more, lest he might escape from her foolish kitten. Now she planted her fore-paw roughly on his back and crouched over him. Then she looked at her kitten, bared her jaws and growled. She took the mouse into her jaws by the head and stood up, still growling. She walked away a few paces, with the long tail dangling down her breast and the little pale naked feet beating frantically against her mouth. She crouched again, turned her head sideways and put a paw against the mouse's body, as if she were going to eat him. A cry came from the kitten. The mother dropped the mouse smartly, got to her feet and moved away, smelling the ground all round.

At last the kitten understood. His mother's gesture, as she pretended to eat the mouse, had roused the lust to kill in him. The strange smell of the brown body now made him feel savage. He felt the same desire for violent movement as when he pierced the paper with his claws and rolled himself voluptuously against the soft petals of the flowers. This passion was, however, much more violent. It made his body rigid. He moved forward slowly, in the peculiar way his mother had come down the sloping lawn, with bent back and lowered head and moist, red tongue exposed. He kept lifting his fore-paws and shaking them, to loosen the stricture of his muscles. His neck was strained stiffly forward. His tail was trailing just above the ground.

Almost smothered, the mouse again lay in a stupor. He lay on his side with his legs in the air. Except when his snout jerked spasmodically, with each convulsive intake of breath, he lay still as death. Now the kitten was standing over him, growling savagely, ready for the pounce.

Suddenly, there was a mighty roar, which made the kitten close his mouth with a snap. It was the thunderous bark of a dog. The kitten looked round and saw a large white dog with black

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spots coming at a headlong pace. The kitten at once forgot the mouse and his lust to kill. The enormous shape of the bounding dog and the thunderous recurring sounds made him convulse with terror. He fled towards the house with all his hair on end, spitting.

The mother cat also turned to flee, but she returned to secure the mouse after going a little way. Before she could reach the mouse, the dog was upon her. She threw herself on her back and put her legs in the air, with all her claws exposed. Unable to hold his rush, the dog closed with her. She scratched him on the snout and he drew away whining. In a flash, she was on her feet and in flight. He followed with equal speed and soon caught up with her once more. They fought all the way to a laurel bush, in which the cat took cover. The dog ran around the bush, barking and scratching the ground.

The noise of the barking and of the scurrying fight brought the little mouse back to consciousness. He rolled over on his belly and began to drag himself forward. He was unable to support his body on his palsied legs, so he had to crawl on his belly. Little by little, however, he took courage. Finally, he managed to get on his legs and he began to run. He did not know where he was going, but he ran in the direction opposite to the barking.

Then he suddenly threw himself flat on the grass as a new terror menaced him. A woman came running across the lawn, calling to the dog. She almost trod on the mouse as she ran past. The mouse lay still for a little while, shivering, until her voice became distant. Then he ran with all his might until he came to a shed. He crawled through a hole under the door and hid himself among a heap of firewood.

The woman drove away the dog. Then the cat came forth from the bush and ran, mewing angrily, to the spot where she had left the mouse. The kitten ran from the house and joined her. Together, they smelt about the grass, mewing angrily, with bent backs, their heads close to the ground and their tongues exposed. They could not find the scent of the fugitive.

The mouse was now fast asleep from exhaustion, safe among the heap of firewood.

* * *

THE REALIST

A little sincerity is a dangerous thing, and a great deal of it is absolutely fatal.

OSCAR WILDE, The Critic as Artist

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LAST MAN ALIVE

"It was the will of God!" he said

by CONRAD RICHTER

IT'S just a relic today, a huge old box, plain and ugly as sin, with a heavy and unwieldy lid. The date, 1762, when probably it was made, is carved crudely in the dark-stained pine. Those who pass it in the museum scarcely give it a glance. "Of what use is such an ancient and monstrous thing in this modern world?" they think. For never in those early times did folk have such terrible problems to solve as today.

But if you wait till the guard has wandered into another room, you may, if you are strong enough, lift the heavy lid. And in the breath of vanished old quilts and early American life rising from the grain of wood you may catch the faint scent of hickory smoke and may apples that clung around the dress of Jess Galloway, the bound girl, as she stood that day of the mid-Revolution in the tiny settlement of Fisher Valley and faced what was ahead of them all.

Oh, she knew what awful thing was wrong with the world, and had known it for some time. Men in a hurry had been calling at the settlement on their way south. What they said was told only to the men behind closed doors, but you could leave it to the women to find out. And when they had, they wished they hadn't, for this wasn't just an Indian scare. No, this was extinction, the end of the world for Central and Northern Pennsylvania, and perhaps much farther. The enemy was leading the savages to burn, scalp and exterminate. In all this great empire of forest, no white men or women were to be left alive.

Ever since spring, settler folk had been driven out, but now, with the terrible news from the Wyoming Valley of Pennsylvania, those still left were clearing out of their own accord. That was a sight to see, men, women and young ones in boats, arks, canoes, rafts—anything that would float, even hog troughs—running down the Susquehanna! Most of their farm and household stuff had to be left behind.

And this was only the West Branch. It was the same on the North Branch. Where did all the displaced settler folk come from? Jess wondered, for these were just the lucky ones that got away. Behind

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them in clearings for many a mile folk lay with wood flies buzzing round their hacked heads.

But do you think the men in Fisher Valley would go? No, not them. They said the Dunkards on the other side of Third Gap in Limestone Valley weren't going at all, and Fisher Valley would wait till its crops were harvested. Even then it would be hard enough to give up the good black land they had cleared and the log houses they had built. Their flax they would have to leave unpulled, and their corn standing small and green in the field. But their wheat and rye they could reap, thresh, sack and take along. It would give them bread this coming winter wherever they might be.

Now today the last of the wheat was being flailed, and tomorrow they would go. Hardly could Jess believe that this was their last day in the valley. Seldom had she seen a seemlier one. The air from the English Lakes blew clear and crystal over Shade Mountain. The July sun lay golden on the long, ragged wheat stubble. Blue dinner smoke rose from the small cluster of clay chimneys, and the grey settlement walls looked soft and homelike as guinea fowl.

But where was Ashael? All morning Jess had asked this of herself. Here it was the last day and no sight of the stern young Amishman who last spring had asked the elder to marry them. The elder could have done it, too, for it was given him to baptize and marry as well as preach. But he wouldn't set Jess free till her contract was up. You might think Ashael would get mad, so straight and small and doughty he stood, with a blue eye like ice in his sightly face framed by his red hair and beard. But the Amish were men of God, and more patient than this one looked. All he said was he would wait, and went back to his bachelor holding over Shade Mountain.

This morning, threshing on the barn floor, Jess kept going to the door. But never did she get a sight of his clean black suit fastened with hooks and eyes, and his blacker hat with the broad brim.

"If it's Ashael you look for, you needn't," the elder told her at last. "He's not coming."

The bound girl felt the flail strike against her heart. "Didn't you send him word?" she cried.

"Oh, he's had plenty word. Not for anything but God would he leave his place," he said. "You ought to remember how stubborn he is. Not a penny would he pay to buy off your contract. Not even to marry you."

"Why should he?" Jess stuck up for him. "He's just starting out, and poor."

"Not so poor. He has the Great Chest from the old country. But he wouldn't part with it."

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" What would be the use ? He can wait two years and get me for nothing."

" Yes, if you stay single for him. But how does he know some other man won't come along and buy you off from me ? You're big and strong and a good worker. Some even say you're good to look at. Women don't grow on every bush in this country."

"Ashael don't need to worry. I'll wait for him," Jess said stolidly.

Just the same, she could hardly eat her early noon dinner. In the middle of it a Tioga man with long hair and a boy on the saddle in front of him rode out of the woods shouting terrible words. He halted by the elder's house and called that Dunkardtown in Limestone Valley had been burned. All were wiped out. Wasn't there some saved, Jake Bender asked.

Not a Dunkard lifted his hand or complained, the stranger said, for that was against their belief. " It's God's will," was all they said as the tomahawk fell on themselves and their families. Of the whole settlement, only this boy he found hiding in the woods was left to tell him what happened.

Everybody in little Fisher Valley had crowded around to hear and sicken, everybody save Jess. All she could think of was Ashael, alone over in his valley. None saw her, except it might be Mary, as she put the house between her and the people and took the Indian path across the mountain.

Many a time when she went for the cows or on a Sabbath walk had she thought of her marriage day when she would take this path to Ashael's valley. First the path led through a wide hollow of noble pines and hemlocks. Even in winter the snow looked dark in here. Beyond was the spring where the great velvet bird's-foot violet and yellow lady's-slipper grew. Oh, this path would be a mortal sweet place to walk on your marriage day, but today she saw feathers in every bush and a spear in every sapling.

So thick stood the forest on the north side, she could get no look at the valley below. Not till she reached the bottom, had waded Ashael's creek and climbed around the limestone outcrop did she come out in the clearing. There stood the peaceful scene as always, Ashael's log cabin, his round log barn, his stumpy fields in wheat, grass and corn, with a patch of potatoes by the house. From the woods came the lazy tank-tank-tank of a cowbell. The wheat stood uncut, for the season came a little later over here. In the hayfield loading his cart was Ashael.

His horse, lonesome over here in this valley, gave a little whinny at the sight of Jess. Until then, Ashael didn't see her. That was Ashael all over. The savages could crawl within a dozen yards of him and never would he believe they were there. He looked for good, not for evil.

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But he was the man for her, Jess told herself, seeing him again standing there by his cart so straight and doughty for such a little fellow, and mighty brave to be living by himself over here in the wilderness.

His face hardly changed as she told him about Dunkardtown. His eyes kept looking around his little farm in the clearing. She hardly believed that he heard her. His strong cheeks kept warding off the bad words, so that it seemed even to Jess what she said couldn't be. The hay smelled tame and sweet like always over here in this peaceful valley. Wheat stood gold as a sovereign on the stalk. A bird sang in the forest, and over them stood the mountain like a sentry on guard. Only the ugly recollection of what the Tioga man had said kept coming back to plague her.

"Don't look at your crops, Ashael!" she begged him. "Just go before it's too late!"

"Run off, you mean?" He looked at her sharply. "Where can you go from the hand of the Lord? He can strike you down in the town as easy as up here."

"He kin," Jess agreed. "But most likely He won't want to. Now, I can't say that much for the Injuns."

"No red man would do me harm," Ashael promised. "Not a one ever left my door without something to eat or a place to sleep."

"That's what the Dunkards used to say, and look what happened to them!"

"It was the Lord's will," he said, very low, but Jess heard him.

"The Lord had nothin' to do with it," she declared warmly. "The Dunkards just wouldn't stand up and defend themselves."

"It's in our Bible. If your adversary strike you, turn the other cheek."

"You don't always git a chance to do that with an Injun," Jess observed. "Once his tomahawk hits you, you're a gone Josie. You got to hit him first."

"Our people," Ashael said, "don't take up arms against anybody."

"Wouldn't you lift a hand to save your own self . . . or me?"

"No, for to lose your life is to save it."

Jess looked at him. "Then it's true what Elder Kring said about you."

"What did he say?"

"That you were stubborn as a mule."

"I'm glad if I'm stubborn in my belief."

"Well, if you want to be stubborn, I kin, too," she told him. "It says in the Bible it's not good for man to be alone. And if you won't come with us, I'm-a-goin' to stay up here with you."

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The first alarm crossed the Amishman's face. "No, that you can't do."

"Why can't I? Who'll stop me?"

"I will," Ashael promised. "Never will I live with a woman in sin!"

"It would only be for a year or two," Jess explained. "When a parson comes through, we kin be married. If none comes, we could go down the river sometime . . . once our young ones are old enough."

"That's enough!" Ashael cried, and his face was dark with anger. "Till your time is up, you belong to the elder! If you won't go back yourself, I'll have to take you!"

Jess's mouth got a peculiar ropy look, and if Ashael had known her better, he might have taken warning. But at that moment rumbling sounds rolled along the mountain, as of distant thunder.

"You ought to git your hay in first, Ashael," she said mildly. "I kin help you. Then you kin send me over."

"How do I know," he asked sternly, "that a girl who would live in sin will keep her word?"

"You're a man," Jess said meekly. "And if I wouldn't, you could make me."

"Yes, well," Ashael agreed. "If you want to help a little, Jess, I won't say no. Afterwards, I'll walk with you over the mountain. I meant to go over anyway and bid everybody goodbye."

The rest of the day, scarcely speaking, they worked in the hayfield. Jess raked it into piles and stood on the cart to stamp down the forkloads from Ashael. Sometimes she took the fork herself and swung up as heavy loads as he. She believed she could lift still heavier, but never would she shame Ashael in his own field. It took longer than they thought. When they finished, the sun was already down behind North Mountain. The valley felt cooler in shadow. But where was the storm whose thunder they had heard? The sky hung still without a cloud and blue as a gentian.

"Hadn't we better milk before we go?" Jess asked, still mild. And when the milking was done: "Ashael, I'm a mite hungry. I guess it's from the hay and crossing the mountain. If you feed every savage that comes this way, maybe you could spare me a bite of supper. It wouldn't hurt you to eat either."

He gave her a searching look, but did not refuse. Sitting there at the hewn table in Ashael's cabin, with Ashael's own bread and milk between them, with his fireplace on one side, his gun, that must be used only for game, in the corner behind the door, his bed on the floor, and near it the long chest that came from the old country, Jess felt almost as if she were already Ashael's wife and mistress of his

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house and lands. Never, she told herself, would she give him up now. First she would put him off till tomorrow. Then the elder and the Fisher Valley folks would be gone.

So long did she keep sitting at the table after Ashael finished that he grew uneasy and restless. He got up and put away all save her bowl and spoon. Now with impatience, he watched her make what little she had left last a long time. Daylight faded from the cabin, so that already it seemed dark in here.

"I have seen many eat, but never a bird like you," he told her at last. "How do you get any work done?"

"I kin work with any woman!" Jess shot at him. "Or with a man, either!"

"Then let's see how good you climb the mountain," he said, "or it will be dark on us before we get started."

She pushed back her bowl and spoon. "It's no use, Ashael," she said. "I'm not a-goin' off without you."

She was not prepared for the terrible look that came on his face. "So the word of a girl that would live in sin is not worth anything after all?" he lashed her.

"I never said I'd go . . . only that you could make me," Jess reminded him.

"So I could . . . if I wanted to," he rebuked her.

For a minute they faced each other, Jess with her black hair and slate-grey eyes, and Ashael with his red beard and hair and his eyes blue as limestone. He stood so straight and righteous for such a little fellow. Oh, he had muscles you could never pinch. He could give her a tussle, if he wanted to. But in her heart Jess knew that never could he throw her and drag her out. No, rather she could swing him off the floor and set him where she wanted.

"Only my belief stops me," he said, bleak as a ploughed field in winter. "You needn't worry. I won't lift my hands against you any more than against an Indian."

He went to his long chest and began lifting out what lay inside. He made all into two piles and tied them up in the blankets from his bed. Then he went for the door.

"Where are you goin', Ashael?" she asked.

"Not with you, woman," he said. "If you won't go from here, then you can stay and I will go. The Indians can't drive me off. Only one like you can. If you come after me, I'll leave where I am and go up to Dunkardtown."

"Dunkardtown is burnt, Ashael."

"Not the land. A new house and barn I can build for myself."

Quietly she sat at the table. Presently she could hear him out at the barn, hitching up and throwing his farm things in the cart. He drove to the door and started to carry out his packs and kettles.

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"You needn't do that, Ashael," she said, getting up. "I only reckoned to stay and help you with your work and cook your meals and sew your clothes. But I won't run you off your own place. If you won't stay, then I'll go my own self."

"You said that before."

"I'll go for sure now," she said. "Goodbye, Ashael."

"Wait! I want to go along and see that you do what you say!" he said sternly.

"You needn't. I gave my word now."

"I'll go just the same," he told her. "You could hide in the woods and come back tonight and tomorrow. There is neither bar nor lock on my door."

Well, it was all over, Jess told herself as they tramped up the mountain. Most likely this was the last time that ever she would see him or cross Shade Mountain. It was pitch dark when they reached the summit. The moon would soon be up, Ashael said, and then they could see, once they got out of the timber.

"You're sure they didn't leave this morning already?" he asked of a sudden, when they were half way down.

Oh, she knew what made him suspicious. She had noticed it herself—the smell of smoke; not the good homelike scent of chimney smoke, but the rank stench of burning household logs, chinking and rubbish. It grew stronger as they went on by the dark spring, through the black pines and hemlocks and by the unseen swamp where the cows liked to get away from the flies. Then suddenly they came out of the woods and saw in the darkness before them great red eyes winking at them from where the settlement ought to be.

"Ashael, don't go any farther!" she warned him.

Ashael had stopped, but only for a moment. "I'm not scared," he told her. "Nobody will hurt an Amishman. But you better stay back. I can't answer for you."

It was true, Ashael feared nothing, she told herself as he went on, with her following close behind. Her eyes could barely make out the path in the meadow they followed. Half way across, Ashael stumbled over something, and she thought she heard him take the Lord's name under his breath. When she reached down her hand froze. Here in the path she could feel a dress and apron she thought she knew, but the body in them lay stiff and cold.

"Ashael!" she cried, stifling a scream. "It's Mary!"

Ashael stood by with a man's clumsy sympathy. She could not see his face, but he did not take off his broad-brimmed hat.

"God's will be done," he muttered.

Huddled there above the silent body of her friend, Jess waited

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while the story of this shocking thing worked like a deadly poison through her mind. The savages must have struck that afternoon not long after she had gone, and that had been the rattle of distant thunder that she and Ashael had heard. Probably Mary had run for the mountain, too, and here they had overtaken her. In her mind's eye Jess could see a savage with his uplifted tomahawk cutting her down.

For a while longer she and Ashael stood there, listening, watching. Not a shadow moved across the dying red beds of coals. No sound rose save the hoot of some big-eared owl up the valley. Where the settlement had stood and flourished with human life and household comforts, and with shelter and feed for the stock, now all was death and desolation.

When he started on she came after. She remembered the saying of Jake Bender that seldom did the savages attack at night. No, they preferred to do their dirty work in the daytime and camp by evening in some hidden spot far from their bloody deeds. Just the same, she would have felt better with Ashael's gun in her hands. When they reached the ashes of the elder's barn, no rifle cracked or arrow sang, though they stood plain targets against the scarlet-orange embers.

As they stayed on there, the moon came up, lately full, bulging a little on one side, as if misshapen with the evil of the night. Rather she would have had it down, for now they had to put their eyes on what there was to see.

One by one they accounted for all of the settlement save three. Tilly Fegley they found lying on her face, scalped; and Mordecai with his wounded head in the spring that still flowed a little red, Jess fancied. Jake Bender was a mutilated sight and the reason plain to see, for his gun, with the barrel bent nearly double, lay by the ashes of his house. His wife and old mother were behind the wall of the barn, and Sairy lay in the garden, her sunbonnet hanging on a scorched bush of little dark brown blooms that the Pennsylvania Dutch call shrubs.

The Tioga man and the boy on the front of his saddle must have gone before the attack. Not a trace of them could be found, or of the two small Fegley boys. Likely they were taken prisoner, for young whites make as good Indians as red ones. But where was the elder?

Then, as they came to the walnut by the run, a figure with gory head sat up and asked for a drink of water. He was a fearful sight to see, like somebody rising from the grave. His eyes already had the glaze of death, and when Jess ran with water in a broken pot, he had lain back again and barely could he swallow.

"Where are the others?" he whispered.

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"They are here," Jess told him.

"Gone, all gone," he moaned.

"All save the Fegley young ones," Ashael said.

"And they are worse than dead," Jess added bitterly.

"Well, I am not long for this world either," the elder said, very low.

"You'll be better by morning, perhaps," Ashael promised.

"Don't fool yourself, Ashael," the elder whispered hoarsely. "Don't wait too long, like we did."

Ashael didn't say anything.

The elder went on. "One time you asked for Jess. Now I give her to you. She's no good to me any more."

Jess saw Ashael flinch.

"She must go down the river, elder," he said. "We are not married."

The elder lay a while breathing heavily, his pale eyes fixed on one and then on the other. "You want him in marriage, Jess?"

She turned slowly and looked at Ashael. "If he's a-willin'," she said.

Together, she and Ashael waited. The elder lay for a while with closed eyes. They did not know if he was dead or dying, but then he looked at them.

"In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost!" he began in a voice so strong it startled them. "We are gathered together for the purpose of holy matrimony—"

That was the strangest wedding Jess Galloway ever knew, with never a house or room to be married in, with nothing but the night air to stand in, with the holy words said by a preacher cut down like a tree on the ground, and with the moon for light while around them still glowed the evil embers. One time the voice of the dying elder rang out like that of God Himself, and then again it grew so faint that Jess had to bend her head to listen, for never would she miss hearing the words of her own marrying. But the worst was that Mary and Sairy couldn't be with her at her wedding.

She was Ashael's lawful wife now, she told herself when it was over. It put iron in her as she went around with him fetching the bodies in to be buried in the elder's root cellar. Never could they dig a separate grave for each this night. Here they could lay them all side by side, with the oldest at one end and the youngest at the other. Many times Jess went over their order in her mind, so she could tell where each lay. They had no box, but Ashael spread over them some bedclothes stiff with blood that had missed the fire. Then Ashael, with the pick, and Jess, with the shovel, caved in the

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earthen roof of the root cellar and covered them over with the dark rich soil.

Not till they were done did Jess come on freshly cut grass and leaves covering a spot of ground. When they bared it, they found a new grave. Ashael said it was an Indian grave, and if they dug, likely they would find the savages accounted for by Jake Bender.

It was late and the bulging moon half gone across the sky when they started back to their place in Ashael's valley. Rather would Jess have gone for the river, had Ashael been willing, but she was a married woman now, and where her man went she would have to follow. Oh, never, when she had thought ahead of marrying Ashael some day, did she expect such a sober wedding journey as this over Shade Mountain in the dead of night, with the lonesome feeling that in this vast region they were the only white people left alive.

Her first word she spoke when they came to the summit. "Ashael, do you reckon you could do something for me and count it a weddin' present?"

"If I can, Jess, I'll do it," Ashael promised. Never had his voice sounded kinder.

"Will you put a bar on the door tonight when we git home?"

He was silent a while, and she knew she had displeased him. "I'll do it, like I said, if you want me," he agreed. "But it can do no good. Those who come by my house are always welcome, and I'd have to open the door anyhow."

Jess felt thunderstruck. "You mean you'd open to those red devils?"

"Their skins are red, but they have souls like we do," Ashael reproved her.

"Yes, souls black as the pots of hell!" Jess told him. "They'll never come in my house!"

"Then I'll have to go outside and talk to them."

"After what you saw tonight?"

"They did a bad thing, and I don't stand up for it," Ashael said. "But 'vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.' Anyway, they would never do it to me."

"But what if they did?" Jess demanded.

"Then it would be God's will," Ashael said humbly.

Jess's face in the darkness was bitter. In her heart she prayed that Ashael's barn and house might be burned down when they got there. It would mean that the savages had come and gone. If the house and barn stood, it meant it was still to be. Oh, never for a minute did she expect that they would be overlooked. The savages knew every white place north of the mountains. Not a holding but was marked in their minds for destruction.

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Her prayer was not answered. When they came up the cartpath around the shale bank and into the clearing, there stood the house and barn in the moonlight exactly as they had left them. The axe raised up undisturbed from the chopping block. From the barn came Gruzel's whinny, and from the woods the lazy tank-tank of Star's bell. The moon itself hung peaceful far up the valley, throwing long shadows over the fields. Only the black stumps made her think of savages hiding in the wheat. She picked up the axe from the chopping block and took it in with her. Inside the cabin, once they had lighted a fire of hickory bark, all was tranquil and untouched.

Was it possible she had been wrong, she asked herself. Could it be that those red heathen would not bother Ashael, knowing his ways for peace? Then she forgot her fears, for this was her wedding night . . .

It was getting daylight when she awoke. Now, what had wakened her, she wondered. Then she heard it again—an anxious whinny from the barn. Jess got up swiftly and went to the open window. A morning fog covered the valley, but it was not heavy enough to keep her from seeing a file of three figures coming, silent as the mist itself, from the woods.

Almost she gave a cry of joy, for the first looked like a woman in a red-check gown. With a flash of warm feeling, it came to her that no longer was she the only white woman in these lonesome woods. Today she would have another of her kind for company. Then the joy died in her throat as she saw that the figure carried a rifle, like the others, and that all three had the same tufted and half-shaven heads. Suddenly she knew, with a wave of horror, where she had seen red checks like that before—in a tablecloth from some Pennsylvania Dutch settler's house, now most likely in ashes and its mistress murdered close by.

"Ashael!" she tried to rouse him. As the file of men came closer her eyes tried to make out what besides rifles they carried. Furry objects, they looked like, some short, some long and flowing, some black, brown and fair as tow. Now she recognized them for what they were—scalps stretched over hoops to dry, and perhaps the freshest was the long chestnut hair of Mary Bender.

"Ashael!" she begged, and touched him, but his breathing never changed from the long, deep snores that all night had seemed to suck up the air around her, so there was none left for her to breathe.

Oh, she knew men were heavier sleepers than women. Mary used to say that her father would sleep through a thunder-and-lightning storm. But this man of hers must be the master sleeper of the lot. Or else his work of yesterday, the strain last evening and, on

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top of that, his wedding night, had been too much for him. In his red frame of beard, his sleeping face looked like a saint's, but one that even in his dreams knew his own will and would suffer none to change it.

She looked around. The great dower chest still stood open, its lid back against the wall as Ashael had left it last evening. She bent down and slipped her strong young arms under his back and knees. The rhythm of his breathing changed for a moment. Surely now he must awake. Then, after a moment, his snores rang out stronger than ever, as if to drown out this interference. She lifted him quickly over the dower chest and let his body down inside. His knees had to stick up. His snoring had stopped now. She set a chip on the chest's edge for air and closed the lid. Then her fingers fastened the iron catch with the peg.

Now, God forgive her, but there Ashael would have to stay. In her bare feet she went to the door and braced it shut with a puncheon. As she straightened she saw a curious-looking stick moving beyond the window. It pushed higher and closer to the sill. Then she knew it for a bruised and splintered ramrod sticking out from its thimbles. A greasy rifle barrel and painted face followed, both turning this way and that, trying to find the Amishman in his bed.

Jess's hands were slowly fixed on Ashael's gun standing by her in the door corner. An ancient and heavy piece, the fore stock had been fastened to the barrel with bands of tow. Whether it was loaded or not, Jess did not know, only that Ashael's other gear he kept in working order. This gun might never be used save on game, but if she knew Ashael, it would be primed and ready. She cocked the hammer. At the click, the savage looked up and saw her in the dimness. Before he could turn his rifle, she took aim at that paint-streaked face and pressed the rusty old trigger.

The roar echoed through the cabin. Then, as the sound kept on, Jess realized it wasn't the shot any more, but a violent pounding inside the chest.

"Jess!" Ashael shouted. "Let me out!"

She paid him no attention. The savage was gone from the window, but now she heard them at the door. Oh, that was the savage way—to draw a white man's fire and then get at him with the tomahawk before he had time to reload. Jess threw down Ashael's gun, for it was no use to her now, and set her stout body against the door, with the axe beside her.

"Jess, live you yet?" Ashael called. "Let me free!"

"I live yet, Ashael, but I can't let you free!"

"Woman, open this chest!" he ordered in anger.

Oh, if Ashael wasn't a godly person, if only he had been one to quarrel and fight, like Jake Bender, she couldn't have opened the lid

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quick enough. If ever she needed a man by her side, she needed him now. But not a lover of peace to open the door, hold out his hands, and then all he could say was, " God's will," when a bullet fetched him down. Rather have him stay where he was. That's why she had put him there. And yet, how could she hold the door herself against three ? Already the puncheon was beginning to slip in the earthen floor. She could hear the savages' fearful yells of exultation as they felt the door give. In violent jerks and shovings, they pressed it far enough for one with his hatchet to worm himself a little way through, and another to put his head after.

With her strong foot and thigh wedged against the door, Jess held them there. Ashael's axe hung clenched in her long, powerful fingers. Now her face grew cruel and the memory of what pitiful things she had seen last night steeled her arms and heart. Sucking in her breath, she raised the heavy bit.

" That's for Mary ! " she cried when she fetched it down. " And that's for Sairy ! " she cried louder, as she struck again and kept on till both lay like butchered bullocks between hewn door and log jamb. Then, taking a fresh hold, she waited for the third. But, although she stood there a long time, none came. She opened the door a little wider. The mist had thinned. After a while the sun rose over Shade Mountain. The clearing looked calm and peaceful in the light. She could hear the sound of water running over stones in Ashael's creek. Over and over again came the mortal sweet song of the woods robin.

Not till then did she think of the window. It flashed through her mind that the other savage could have reloaded and shot her in the back while she stood there. But when she went to the window, she saw him lying on the ground.

The loud rattling of the chest roused her. Well, she had done what she could. She guessed she must let Ashael out now. Much rather she wouldn't, for it would take a braver body to stand up to Ashael than to the savages.

Making a sober face, she pulled out the peg and laid back the lid. She knew then she wasn't wrong, for his face was like the avenging angel's when he came out. Not a word did he say to her, even after he saw the savages at the door. In silence he took the gun and axe, and carried them out to the barn. When he returned, it was with the shovel and grubbing hoe.

Long before he came in, she had breakfast ready, and he ate his fill, but not a word could she get out of him. His face was grim as stone. Oh, she had time now to think over what she had done to him. She had lifted her hands in arms against those who came to his house. She had saved him, but she had disgraced him too. More than once had she heard of a Swiss or Dutch wife who bedevilled

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her man till he made a vow never to speak to her again. Not for a minute had she dreamed she would do such a thing to Ashael. She should have known better. Never need she expect him to open his mouth to her again.

That's the way it worked out. Corn ripened, was cut and husked. Snow fell and melted. Ice formed on the gats. Snow fell again, and this time it laid. Now, wasn't it too bad? They were two that had been spared from the heathen, maybe the only two for a hundred miles, and here they had to live together like dumb brutes in the stall! When he sat with her at their table, it was as if he had no tongue. Even his prayers to his Maker were dumb. Only his lips moved.

Well, if he would say no word, neither would she, not even about the babe she carried. When the pains came on her one night in April, never did she let on. She got his breakfast as usual, though hardly could she wait to get rid of him from the house. The young one gave her a hard tussle before it was born.

More than once that morning she would like to have called to Ashael for help, but she set her jaws tight. If he could take care of his business without talking, so could she. More than once she had helped with birthing. Now she tended herself, crawling to the fire on her hands and knees for warm water to wash the babe, to smooth it down afterwards with melted coon tallow, and for the child's long flannel gown she had long since sewed with Ashael's coarse thread and needle.

Back in her floor bed, Jess lay with her babe close by her. Well, Ashael could hold his tongue from this hour if he wanted. She had a man now she could talk to and listen to. Already he was telling her things at the top of his Tom Thumb lungs. If Ashael wasn't ploughing in the far field, he couldn't help but hear him.

Towards noon, when the babe slept, she was startled to hear somebody talking. It must be Ashael talking to the horse, she reckoned. Then she heard voices she had never heard before—white men's voices. They sounded from the barn. After a while she could tell they were coming towards the house, for it was noon and time for dinner.

Not soon would she forget how strange and shy she felt when the soldier stepped into the cabin. Why, he was the first human, besides Ashael and the baby, she had laid eyes on since early last summer! Behind him came another. Both carried muskets.

"You didn't say you had a baby!" the first one called out.

Jess saw Ashael reach out his head at that. Oh, never a word did he say, but a look spread on his face that Jess never saw before and hardly ever after. He stood for a minute not knowing what to do,

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and this his own house and household goods. Then he came over to the bed, and Jess saw him watching the little old puckered red face sticking from the bedclothes beside her.

"It's a girl or boy, Jess?" he asked very low.

"It's a boy."

"You all right?"

"I'm real good."

"Can I get you anything?"

"No, but I reckon you'll have to git your own dinner," she told him.

That's all he said and that's all she said, but never would Jess have believed the good feeling that ran over her. Ashael had talked to her. Nerve strings she never reckoned she had in her body let go. The cabin took on a different look, like it had the first time she laid eyes on it. Through the window she could see the bright sunshine on the red flowers of the maples. Down in the gats peepers were calling.

Ashael got dinner, with the two soldiers helping. All the time they swapped news. Their talk sounded sweet as music in Jess's ear.

"We never expected to find somebody living up here," the first soldier said. "I still can't get it through my head. How was it the Indians didn't get you?"

Ashael thought for a minute. He looked over at Jess, and his face was sober as a preacher's on Sunday.

"It was the will of God," he said shortly.

* * *

SIMPLE

In the smoke room of a country hotel a young man was boasting of his surprising sporting experiences. At length there was a pause, and the young man turned to his neighbour, who had listened and not said a word, and asked if he had any adventures to relate.

"Nothing to compare with your stories," his neighbour said, "but I did once have a nasty time in Africa. I had put my gun down under a tree and walked some dozen yards away when a lion sprang out of the bushes almost on top of me."

"What did you do?" asked the young man.

"Well," he said quietly, "I just seized his upper jaw with my right hand, and his lower with my left, and held his mouth open till he starved."

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WHO GOES THERE?

The iron tongue of midnight hath told twelve ;
Lovers, to bed ; 'tis almost fairy time.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

When cats run home and light is come,
And dew is cold upon the ground,
And the far-off stream is dumb,
And the whirring sail goes round,
And the whirring sail goes round ;
Alone and warming his five wits,
The white owl in the belfry sits.

When merry milkmaids click the latch,
And rarely smells the new-mown hay,
And the cock hath sung beneath the thatch
Twice or thrice his roundelay,
Twice or thrice his roundelay ;
Alone and warming his five wits,
The white owl in the belfry sits.

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

Phantom Ride

There's a ride in the woods that the poacher shuns,
No wires are set in the rabbit runs,
And the dark firs sigh against the sky
When evening comes.

There's a ride in the woods where hounds won't follow,
They lose the scent in the Upper Hollow,
And horses shy when they pass by
That ride in the woods.

There's a ride in the woods where no keeper goes,
Where the proud cock pheasant seldom crows,
And what stalks there when the moon is bare
God only knows !

DENYS WATKINS-PITCHFORD

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★*In every land folk tales have been woven around legendary heroes and handed down the centuries from father to son. In Anatolia the favourite hero is Nasr-ed-Din, sometimes philosopher, sometimes simple rustic, often a rogue. But always lovable, imperturbable, and cheerfully equal to any situation.*

HODJA AND THE MIRACULOUS SHRINE

An Anatolian folk-tale retold

by A. KITROEFF

MANY years ago, when Nasr-ed-Din Hodja was but a youth, he went into the service of the venerable Hadji Bekir, one of the most remarkable and highly successful of holy men who dwelled in the green and fertile valleys of Anatolia.

Hadji Bekir was the keeper of a shrine: the shrine of a saint who had long since died but who, like most saints, did his best work from the grave and through the medium of his disciple and follower, the eminent Hadji Bekir.

Thousands of pilgrims flocked annually to the shrine to be cured by the white-robed and beturbanned Hadji who, with a booming voice, invoked the spirit of the saint and then wrote down the secret formula on little strips of parchment which had to be worn next to the skin for forty days and forty nights.

If a man was possessed of a fever, then Hadji Bekir would blow down his throat and the fever would leave him; if a man had an ache in his belly, then Hadji Bekir would prod it with his finger, call out the magic words, and the ache would depart; and if a woman was sterile, then Hadji Bekir would give her a hair from the beard of the saint himself which she must place under her pillow and sleep over for nine months.

Near by, the holy man had built a little monastery where he lived in austere simplicity and taught a handful of apprentices and disciples, for there was no man in Turkey who knew the sacred writings of the Book and the commentaries thereon better than the venerable Hadji Bekir.

His disciples did all the housework, drew water from the well, tended the vines and vegetable gardens, ground the flour, baked the bread and, when there was a particularly large crowd at the shrine,

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gave a hand in curing minor ailments like toothache, carbuncles or ingrowing toe nails.

One of these was Nasr-ed-Din, a simple country youth who could not yet read or write but who worshipped his master blindly and would have willingly died for him. Hadji Bekir, in his turn, felt very affectionate towards the boy and granted him little favours such as allowing him to carry the Book to the mosque where he preached, or letting him comb his bushy grey beard in the morning. On such occasions, Nasr-ed-Din's joy knew no bounds, especially when he felt the envious glances of the other apprentices upon him.

One day, however, Nasr-ed-Din felt homesick and, noticing his crestfallen look, Hadji Bekir asked:

"What is it, my boy, that has driven the sunlight from your face like a sandstorm in the desert?"

"Indeed, master, it is now one full year since I left my home and there is an ache in my heart that will not depart unless I can gaze once more on the radiant faces of my beloved parents."

"Allah be praised!" Hadji exclaimed, "yours is an ailment that can easily be cured. Get your clothes ready, put some food in a basket, saddle the white ass and you can start on your journey at once."

Nasr-ed-Din could hardly believe his ears. His eyes filled with tears of gratitude as he bent down and kissed the hem of Hadji Bekir's *caftan*.

"Come, come now, there is no need for that," Hadji said, graciously, "go to your people and Allah be with you. Come back whenever you feel like it, but I must enjoin you to take good care of the white ass. She is a precious animal and I would not like to lose her."

"I shall take more care of Zarifa," Nasr-ed-Din said, for so the ass was called, "than I do of my own two eyes."

"Then all is well; go with my blessing and may Allah protect you, my son."

Three days later, Nasr-ed-Din was jogging along merrily on Zarifa's back, looking for a shady spot on the roadside where he could feed the ass and lie down for a while and rest.

At last he found it, under a spreading plane tree at the foot of which was a cool brook, bubbling its noisy way across a grass-grown field.

He tied a bag of oats round Zarifa's neck, drank from the stream and lay on the cool grass with his hands pillowing his head, gazing up at the pale blue glory of the Anatolian sky. Soon he dozed off, and when he awoke the sun was sinking in a purple blaze behind a

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distant mountain. His first concern was Zarifa. Untying the nose-bag he found, to his horror, that she had eaten nothing.

"O Zarifa, light of my eyes," he asked anxiously, "why have you not eaten?"

The ass gazed at him mournfully and gave a weak snort.

"Oh, she is sick, she is sick," he wailed, "what am I to do now?" Clasping his hands together he gazed heavenwards.

"Enlighten me, Allah, enlighten me in this, my hour of need," he pleaded. But if Allah heard, He gave no sign.

He led her to the brook, but she would not drink; he plucked the lush grass from the water's edge and offered it, but she turned her head away in disgust; he gave her a good rub down and brushed her until her white coat gleamed in the moonlight. But all to no avail. Finally, she lay down on her side, breathing weakly while Nasr-ed-Din capered round her, at his wits' end, pleading with her and beseeching her not to do this thing to him.

When the sun rose, Zarifa was dead and Hodja was sitting beside her, plunged in the depths of despair, wondering how he was going to face Hadji Bekir now that this terrible calamity had befallen him.

Then he heard sounds in the distance. Looking up he saw a caravan of pilgrims, wending its way slowly along the dusty road, no doubt on its way to the shrine of Hadji Bekir's saint.

Panic gripped him. They would see the dead ass and tell his master about it. What was he to do? Looking round him, he saw a hollow by the roadside. By straining and pulling he managed to drag Zarifa's carcass into it and he quickly set to covering the dead animal with a pile of large stones that he found close by.

When the caravan came up to him the remains of Zarifa were completely hidden from view and Hodja was able to breathe a quick sigh of relief.

The caravan stopped and the leader spoke to Hodja.

"Peace be with you, friend."

"With you be peace, the blessings of Allah, and his infinite mercy," replied Nasr-ed-Din, in the traditional manner.

"What are you burying there, friend?" the man asked.

"Why—why, it is an old man," Hodja stammered, "a saint, a holy man who was travelling with me. He sickened during the night and died, and now I am burying him."

"A saint and a holy man, eh?" the man said, his interest aroused. "Well, no one shall say that a party of devout sons of the Faith will stand idly by and not lend a hand at the burial of a man of God, and a saint to boot. Come on, lads." And with that he dismounted and started piling more stones on Zarifa's grave. One of

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the pilgrims was a mason and with the others helping him, he fashioned the cairn of stones into a tomb that became the envy of all present.

Hodja watched them with his heart in his mouth, wondering what they would do to him if they ever found out the truth about who lay buried beneath that impressive pile.

When they had finished, an old man came up to him and Hodja saw that he was blind.

" My son," said the man, " you were the saint's disciple ; ask him to cure me of my blindness that I may see my children again and my children's children that I may recognize them when we meet again in Heaven."

Hodja gulped. This was more than he had bargained for. He searched his mind feverishly for some means of escape but he could think of nothing. Furthermore, the pilgrims were pressing round him, eager to see a demonstration of his " holy man's " powers.

Resigning himself to his fate with the true fatalism of the Orient, Hodja set about trying to cure the man's blindness as he had seen Hadji Bekir do it hundreds of times before.

Scooping up some earth from around the newly erected tomb he mixed it with a little water and formed a mud pack which he placed over the man's eyes. Then, for an hour without stopping, he mumbled a series of incantations that were as unintelligible to the onlookers as they were to Hodja himself. Finally, he led the blind man to the brook and told him to wash the mud from his eyes. The man did so, trembling with anticipation and then, suddenly, he leapt to his feet and shouted :

" Allah be praised, I can see ! I can see ! I can see ! "

He rushed over to Nasr-ed-Din, who stood rooted there with astonishment, embraced him and showered every conceivable kind of blessing upon him. The other pilgrims crowded round him and treated him with much greater awe and respect than they had done before, each begging him to see what he could do about curing their various ills.

That was only the beginning. Soon, Hodja was able to build a small monastery near the shrine with the generous donations of his patients and later he extended it into a caravanserai where the pilgrims could stay for the night or longer, if they wished. He bought the land round about and laid it out in neat little gardens with fountains and soft green grass on which he would lie in the evenings and watch the stars come out.

Hodja had neither the erudition, the size, nor the impressive manner of Hadji Bekir, but the pilgrims were not blind to the fact that Hodja's saint was a much more powerful one than Hadji

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Bekir's and that Hodja effected many more cures than his erstwhile master.

As the months went by the fame of Hodja's shrine spread throughout the whole of Turkey and the Middle East. Pilgrims came from as far off as the banks of the Tigris and the Nile Delta, bringing with them priceless gifts of precious stones, silks and ivory which all went to decorate the tomb and the monastery.

Nasr-ed-Din lived in a dream world in which Hadji Bekir and Zarifa had almost entirely disappeared into the misty past. Not that Hodja was ungrateful, far from it, but he was so busy with the hundreds of travellers who flocked daily to the shrine that he never spared them a thought.

With Hadji Bekir it was different. Sometimes he wondered what had happened to Nasr-ed-Din and his white ass. He had liked the boy and he was sorry to lose him. But what really preyed on his mind was this new holy man who had become such a roaring success that business at Hadji Bekir's shrine had dropped to a dangerously low level.

One day he decided to visit this Nasr-ed-Din Hodja, and see for himself this new and wonder-working shrine, without the least suspicion that this Nasr-ed-Din and the boy who had been his disciple were one and the same.

On arriving he marvelled at the tomb, the monastery, the well kept gardens and the caravanserai, overflowing with pilgrims.

"This Nasr-ed-Din must be a very holy man, indeed," he said to himself as he was ushered into Hodja's presence.

When they came face to face they both just stood there, gaping.

Hodja found his voice first and throwing himself at Hadji Bekir's feet he tearfully begged forgiveness for what he had done.

"Master, master," he wailed, "spurn me like the mongrel cur that I am; call me camel's dung and spit on me for I am not worthy to touch the edge of thy shadow."

"So it is you, after all," Hadji Bekir gasped, "well, well, who would have thought it? But do not act like that, Nasr-ed-Din, you have nothing to be ashamed of. On the contrary, I am very proud to see one of my pupils doing so well for himself."

"But you do not understand, Hadji," he cried, "you do not understand."

"What is it I do not understand, my son?"

"The tomb," Hodja whispered, "you do not know who lies beneath that tomb."

"I meant to ask you that, Nasr-ed-Din, who is your saint?"

Hodja gulped, and said in a small voice:

"Zarifa."

"Zarifa!"

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Hodja nodded, miserably.

"Does anybody know?" Hadji Bekir asked. "No," said Hodja, "not a soul. I had to tell you, though."

"How did it happen?"

Hodja related the whole story at length and when he had finished Hadji Bekir sat for a full five minutes, plunged in thought.

"Nasr-ed-Din," he said, finally, "I suppose you have often wondered who my saint was."

"Yes, I have," admitted Hodja. "Who was your saint, Hadji?"

"Zarifa's grandmother," said Hadji Bekir, solemnly.

* * *

CARNIVAL OF ANIMALS

How many of these literary creatures—winged, finned or four-footed, fabulous or otherwise—do you recognize? Count one point for the animal, one for the author and one for the source in each case, making a maximum score of 30. The answers are on page 127.

1. *He asked questions about everything he saw, or heard, or felt, or smelt, or touched, being "full of 'satiable curtiosity."*
2. *Though the demurest of her kind, the sight of gold proved too much for this sleek beauty.*
3. *"A wonderful gumption was under his skin, And a clear calm light in his eye."*
4. *Accompanied by skirling and groans and rattling bones, her ghost may appear on a certain road in Devon.*
5. *He was so old and wise that he could spell his name—and almost correctly!*
6. *Her charges were no more willing to be bathed and put to bed than those of any ordinary nursemaid.*
7. *He gave up his stolen treasure and mended his ways to such an extent that he became a saint.*
8. *Normally an unpleasant creature to meet at sea, but fortunate, once—long ago, during a storm—for a man cast overboard.*
9. *They sought it with thimbles, they sought it with care;*
   They pursued it with forks and hope . . .
10. *It was a "wee, sleekit, tim'rous beastie."*

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KING DUCK

"They woolly sheep," he observed, "do say 'tis time I was married"

by T. F. POWYS

IT is well known that a king may not marry without the consent and approval of his subjects. Mr. George Duck was a sovereign of sheep.

When a king is a beneficent and strong ruler, his people are usually in a good liking, and strong, too. Shepherd Duck's flock, owned by Squire Henning, was second only to Mr. Oliver's.

Mr. Duck was a bachelor. His feelings of kingly pride belonged to that state. Had he been married, he would have felt humbler. But even a king of sheep, with all his pride, must eat.

When Mr. Duck returned to his cottage from a long day of governing—which one learns, from the histories of the world, is as tiring an employment as anybody can have—he had to light his own fire, after fetching the furze stalks from his woodshed, and then carry the tea things from his cupboard, cut his bread and butter, and so solace himself, as best he could, with food and his own company.

As he ate, he would nod at his clay pipe, with its bowl burned black, as if, could it be anything but a pipe, he would wish that it were a woman. Now and again, when he least expects it, a king is helped by love.

There was a poor girl who wished to do him service. Her name was Maggie Leaf. She lived—if such a life as hers could be called living—with her grandmother, who disliked her as much as she disliked water, when unmixed with gin.

Maggie was low; she belonged to the lowest kind of village life. No one cared for her, because no one wanted her. She had no friend, and when her grandmother addressed her she called her an ugly brat, a toad, or worse. Maggie was short; she was the kind who would get as round as a ball, had she plenty of food to eat, but, as it was, she was only a little thing and very dirty.

Maggie always blacked her nose when she blacked the fender, and when she went to the well the water was always too cold, or she had not the time to wash in it. She could never go to church,

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for she would be sure to cough or wriggle, which troubled the feelings of the good clergyman Mr. Hayday.

As a contrast to Maggie Leaf, there dwelt at Little Horton Miss Mercy Best. She was the young school-teacher. There was no action of Miss Best's that was not both clean and tidy. She was a very pretty girl, and used to dust the hassock in her pew before she knelt down; and no one could kneel more suitably, as if she really believed that God was in front of her and took especial notice of young women. Even out of church there was nothing that Miss Best did that was not done without regard to the strictest decorum. She would be careful how she walked, and would never trudge along in the mud like poor Maggie, but trip it as lightly as though she were a fairy creature instead of a mortal woman.

If Mr. Duck was the crowned king of a fine flock of woolly sheep, Miss Mercy Best, with her pretty figure and girlish gestures, was queen of all the young males of the human species. For any one of them to be permitted to spend a moment or two in Mercy's company was an honour not lightly to be esteemed; and as she gave pleasure by her gracious ways, so each day was more pleasant than yesterday to her, because each day yielded to her more admiration. And, if such pleasure was hers as a queen, King Duck had it, too.

When a man is a king and feels the high estate that God has given him, no sign of boredom, or any dullness, can ever be his. With his feet deep in the slush and mire, as he moved the hurdles in fog, snow, rain, or mist, with only the dimness of a winter's day about him, Shepherd Duck felt his supreme royalty. His people were there; there were three hundred and fifty of them all told. He was indeed a true father to them, as a great king should ever be.

King Duck knew his people; he knew every desire in their hearts, and it was his wish and endeavour to satisfy them. And they, in their turn, would address him sometimes, with a stamp of the foot and a toss of the head, or even, in extreme cases, a leap over the hurdles.

One winter's night, when Sirius was rising, they warned him against women. Mr. Duck had an armful of hay and was about to lay it down in the fold, and his subjects were gathered about him to partake of the feast, when the warning came.

"Women," the sheep observed—for they all ran up bleating—"are crude and foolish, vain and idle, and in no way or manner, as is shown in their lives, do they understand or appreciate true beauty. They might even consider"—and now the sheep were feeding contentedly—"that there are better ways of spending the night than in tending a flock under the eternal stars, and that bed

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curtains enclose you more happily than bare lonely downs."

King Duck's subjects would not permit a wedding . . .

Shepherd Duck was fifty-five years old. A stern winter came, of unusual severity. And as king, he left nothing undone that could be accomplished for the welfare and comfort of his people. He did not, as King Edward VII used to do—though that was more than one should expect from a king—rise at eight in the morning and retire to rest at twelve o'clock at night. Mr. Duck, during the time of lambing, at least, rarely lay down at all, and then only in his clothes, ready, with his lantern lit, to rise in a moment should any of his people be unwell or in labour.

The east wind, as if it intended to freeze and destroy all living things, blew a continuous gale both night and day, and the lambs needed the closest attention. Outside the fold the snow whirled in eddies, while the icy wind rushed by, bidding all life to shelter or perish.

Amid all the whirling and whiteness of the snow a lonely figure struggled to the upland fold, falling now into the drift here and now into that, stepping along the ice in the furrows, or bravely facing the whole blast of the wind across the snowswept ploughland.

This was Maggie, who was bringing food to Shepherd Duck from the village. When she came to the fold Mr. Duck was away, fetching hay from the rick nearby, and so Maggie, after placing his food in the hut, sheltered, for a few moments of welcome warmth, by the side of a new-born lamb and its mother in a corner of the fold.

Mr. Duck saw her there, but went on with his work without speaking to her. When Maggie was a little rested she began her toilsome journey to the village again. Every day she carried—no matter what the weather was, as long as the lambing lasted—Mr. Duck's provisions to the fold . . .

Even the longest winter, in England at least, does not last for ever, and the early elder-leaf will show shyly, like a young maid the first to arrive in a great ballroom. When the bitter weather changed, Shepherd Duck was troubled about his eyes. After his tea was over he used to read the local paper, but now he could not do this. His reading had always been confined to one particular word—"Sheep." But now his eyes were not good enough to find that word.

Mr. Duck, meeting the Reverend Frederick Hayday in the road, told him that he could not read as well as he used to do. Mr. Hayday advised him to marry a wife. King Duck consulted his people. This time they appeared to be more friendly towards

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women, and informed their king by a bleat or two that he might marry.

What had changed the flock's opinion about women was that they had seen Maggie, and they naturally supposed that, as she had brought their king his food, he would marry her. She had kissed and fondled the new-born lamb, and so they loved and trusted her.

But King Duck had other ideas. He had once met Miss Best walking to church, and he could never forget her. He had thought her—looking at her critically, as a good shepherd will always do—a neat little person, of the queenly kind, and not altogether unworthy of being his consort.

Mr. Duck wondered should he inquire of Mr. Hayday what he ought to do. But Mr. Hayday might begin to talk of religion, a subject that no king ever wishes to be troubled with.

Mr. Duck had got into the habit, when lambing was over, of leaving his cottage door unlocked. He did so for a reason. Every day, when he came home, he found his tea all ready for him. But he hardly took the trouble to notice that all was ready and the fire lit, for such low matters of mere service are not noticed by royalty.

Courtship and marriage among his own subjects was a simple matter. Mr. Duck feared that the same conduct from him might surprise Miss Best. He must ask someone what to do; he thought Maggie would know.

The next time he saw Maggie he said that he had something he wished to ask her about. Maggie blushed. In her grandmother's pigsty she had made a nice hiding place for herself; she had also hidden there two bead necklaces and a very queer little rag doll that Miss Henning had given her when she was three years old.

But the pigsty parlour was a little cramped for space. Maggie always wondered how, if a pig had grown fat inside, it had managed to get out. She could not stand up, and there was not room enough for her to lie down. There was no chimney to put her foot up, as Alice did in Wonderland. To her, Mr. Duck's cottage was a fine mansion, and because she was a simple girl she had always looked up to Mr. Duck as to a king.

Maggie had always reverenced men as gods, and they heeded her as little as if they were. They told her to go, and she went; to come, and she came. When a man sent her to the inn for beer and gave her nothing when she brought the bottle, she was grateful to do his bidding at that price. To be beaten by a man would have given her pleasure; to be loved—but how could that happen?

Mr. Duck called Maggie into his cottage and bade her sit down. Maggie did so respectfully, moving the chair near to the door. As soon as she was seated, Mr. Duck informed her, in kingly terms,

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that he was going to marry Miss Best. The sheep, he said, thought he ought to marry. He would have more time to spend with them if a woman were at home to do the work.

Maggie sighed deeply and looked down.

"How shall I approach the young woman?" he asked. "What must I do to take her as my wife?"

"You best give her a present," Maggie said; "something she would like. Then she will know that you want to have her!"

"What kind of a present ought I to give?" asked King Duck.

Maggie sniffed longingly. Her grandmother was mean. Old Mrs. Leaf had insured Maggie's life for twenty pounds, and so she thought that, if Maggie had only a very little to eat, she might catch a cold and die.

But, instead of dying, Maggie lived, always hungry. She now sniffed again. There was a saucepan on the fire, and in the saucepan there was a mess of lambs' tails such as Maggie's soul loved—the first of the season. Then Maggie spoke.

"Lambs' tails be tasty," she said. "A good dish of lambs' tails be a nice gift."

King Duck was pleased. Evidently Maggie knew what a young lady who was going to be a bride ought to like. Mr. Duck gave her a penny and told her to go.

Maggie went out of the door. One or two doorway gossips, who were standing near, began to say ill things about her. "Wold ram Duck be merry," Mrs. Toole said, and used an odd word or two that made Maggie wonder. Maggie hurried by; she left the woman laughing.

In her pigsty, she took out her necklaces from the hole where they were hidden. She looked at them for a moment or two, kissed the penny Mr. Duck had given her, and put that away also. Then she cried. But how could Maggie envy a young lady, with a piano at home, who wore wonderful clothes and who looked a queen? She cried because she was unhappy . . .

Miss Mercy Best was giving a little party to hear her play. She had practised for a long time, for the party was a very important one to her. Mr. and Mrs. Hayday were invited, and also the son of a friend of theirs, who was a clergyman, too. His name was Mr. Simon. Miss Best had set out her new china cups. She had the greatest confidence in her attractiveness. Someone had said that the Reverend John Simon was looking for a wife.

When the visitors came, they talked of Church music; Miss Best wished herself in heaven for a few moments so that she might have first-hand knowledge of the subject. But she knew well enough where her best discourse came from—out of her delightful young body and her close-fitting frock.

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Mr. Simon thought her very charming; he wanted her very much. But had she any fortune? He thought not. Mr. Hayday had only spoken of her as a pretty girl.

Miss Best hoped that everyone had seen her guests come. Mrs. Toole ought to have noticed them; she was always standing outside her door, but Mrs. Toole had a nasty habit of being disrespectful to her betters.

Miss Best was speaking to Mrs. Hayday in her best drawing room tones when someone knocked at the door. Before she had time to answer the knock, King Duck entered. He brought in with him the smell of his flock. He had not expected to appear in such fine company and he looked a little surprised. He carried a covered basket in his hand. Mr. Hayday opened a book. Mr. Simon looked out of the window. Mrs. Hayday took up some music.

King Duck winked slyly. "They woolly sheep," he observed, "do say 'tis time I was married!" Mr. Duck handed the basket to Miss Best and smiled. He did not wish to dirty the carpet, so he stood in the same place. Then he turned slowly and went out.

King Duck, contrary to the example of most kings, was a thrifty man. He had saved money in a sheep's horn. The horn he hung from a nail that was hammered into the great cottage beam. When he left Miss Best's cottage he saw Maggie crossing the green. There was a large rent torn in her skirt, through which showed Maggie's bare knees.

"I want 'ee," Mr. Duck shouted.

Maggie went to him. He took her to his cottage and poured out a heap of money from the horn.

"Buy wedding clothes," he cried, "for she to whom they fat tails have been given; they sheep do ask for a wedding."

"But she must be fitted!" Maggie exclaimed, gazing in astonishment at so much money.

King Duck's face fell. Apparently matters could not be so easily arranged with young ladies as with his subjects in the matter of weddings. "What can 'ee buy then?" he asked angrily.

"The cake!" replied Maggie.

A man who thinks himself a prince is not always, however worthy he may be to hold the title, thought so by others. When King Duck went boldly to Miss Mercy Best, who was returning from church after receiving the sacrament—given to her by the hands of Mr. Simon, who conducted the service—and gave her a sheep's horn full of money, and bade her prepare for the wedding, she looked a little astonished. And when the king, seeing her stand so blushingly, and thinking her a meek ewe, caught hold of her and kissed her with violence, she broke from his arms and

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screamed loudly.

"Bain't thee going to have I, then?" cried King Duck, who was as astonished by her conduct as she was by his. "And thee did take my gift," he observed gloomily.

"Oh, those horrid tails," she exclaimed, "I gave them to Maggie! No lady would touch such filth!"

Had King John, of doubtful fame, been informed that the lampreys he liked so well were but bastard eels filled with poison, he could not have been more shocked than was King Duck when he heard his favourite dish described as filth.

"Lambs' tails be clean meat," he cried, "but thee bain't the young maiden I took 'ee for, and they sheep would despise thee's foolish talk." And Mr. Duck withdrew, carrying with him his horn of money.

At home he found his tea set as usual, and, what was even more to his liking, a dish of lambs' tails done as well as any country cook could do them, all ready to be eaten. As he went in, Maggie Leaf was going out.

"Who did cook they?" he inquired.

"Miss Best did give them to me," answered Maggie humbly, "and Mrs. Toole did show I how to skin and cook them. I hope you didn't mind, Mr. Duck?"

She looked at the floor.

"Who did turn old ewe on's legs yesterday?" he asked sternly, "when she were on her back, blown and dying in lonely down?"

"Please forgive me, Mr. Duck," said Maggie, "but 'twas I that turned her over."

"'Tis a wife I do want," observed King Duck. "Who were it," he asked, "that did in winter time, when it weren't fit for no dog to be out, carry up food for I into hut?"

"'Twas I, Mr. Duck," Maggie said softly.

"They sheep don't want no vixen to marry shepherd," remarked the king.

"No, Mr. Duck," whispered Maggie.

"How long would it take thee to be fitted?" he asked.

Maggie, scarcely able to speak, murmured, "Three weeks."

"Take thik," cried Mr. Duck.

He handed her the horn of money.

* * *

. . . *WHERE CREDIT IS DUE*

The English instinctively admire any man who has no talent and is modest about it. JAMES AGATE

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STORM IN A TEACUP

It is a sorry thought—

That Fighting—

There is an action against me. I will tell you the truth. About a year ago an attorney of this place gave me ill language in a tavern and I boxed his ears. The quarrel was made up. But again about a month since the very same man in the very same place gave me the same vile language, and to the best of my remembrance I gave him such another box on the ear, to which he answered with a bottle which he threw at me. I replied with candlesticks, which slightly bruised his head.

Pray advise me.

SAMUEL CARTER, *in a letter to Mr. G. Treby, M.P.*, 1682

Is a Radical Instinct—

Caesar was about the size of a small cart-horse, and when he had a mind—and he often had—to lie on the hearthrug, and think with his eyes shut, he was difficult to move. Not that he had an opposive or lazy disposition, but that it was not easy to make him understand. The moment he knew what was wanted of him he was only too anxious to comply.

As, for instance, if he could be convinced of Cats, he would rise and leave the room abruptly, knocking several persons down, and leaving behind him the trail of an earthquake. But his heart was good and pure, and he impressed his admirers somehow that he was always on the side of Urmuzd against Ahriman : he always took part with the Right.

WILLIAM DE MORGAN, 1839-1917, *A Likely Story*

For Living Creation—

To knock a thing down, especially if it is cocked at an arrogant angle, is a deep delight to the blood.

GEORGE SANTAYANA, *Soliloquies in England*

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Will Dispute—

The cottage damson laden as could be
Scowls at the Manor house magnolia tree
That year by year within its thoughtless powers
Yields flowers and leaves and flowers and
leaves and flowers,
While the Magnolia shudders as in fear,
" Figurez-vous ! *two sackfuls every year !* "

ROBERT GRAVES

Over Words—

" I did not mean to abuse the cloth ; I only said your conclusion was a *non sequitur*."

" You're another," cries the sergeant, " an' you come to that, no more a *sequitur* than yourself."

HENRY FIELDING, 1707-1754, *Tom Jones*

And Shadows—

On the wall appeared a spider, himself dark and defined, his shadow no less dark and scarcely if at all less defined.

They jerked, zigzagged, advanced, retreated, he and his shadow posturing in ungainly indissoluble harmony. He seemed exasperated, fascinated, desperately endeavouring and utterly helpless . . .

That spider saw without recognising his black double, and was mad to disengage himself from the horrible pursuing inalienable presence . . .

CHRISTINA ROSSETTI, 1830-1894, *Time Flies*

With Spirits—

All was quiet for a little time while we were in the Chamber with a Light, but we were no sooner out of the Chamber with the Candle but the noise under the Bed, tugging of the Mat, pulling of the Bedclothes began again. Moreover, something came into the Bed, which the Gentlewoman said ran upon her by degrees and seemed little and soft like a Mole. Upon this she shreekt out, and we came in again with the Candle, then all was still again.

JOSEPH GLANVILL, 1636-1680,
Full and Plain Evidence concerning Witches and Apparitions

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And Even With Angels—

Blake told Flaxman that he had had a violent dispute with the Angels on some subject and had driven them away.

HENRY CRABB ROBINSON, *Diary, January*, 1815

For No Reason at All

Thou! why, thou wilt quarrel with a man that hath a hair more, or a hair less, in his beard than thou hast: thou wilt quarrel with a man for cracking nuts, having no other reason but because thou hast hazel eyes . . .

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, *Romeo and Juliet*.

But Sometimes in the End—

"You might, from your appearance, be the wife of Lucifer," said Miss Pross . . . "Nevertheless, you shall not get the better of me. I am an Englishwoman."

CHARLES DICKENS, 1812-1870, *A Tale of Two Cities*

Reason Triumphs

Let's contend no more, Love,
Strive nor weep:
All be as before, Love,
—Only sleep!

What so wild as words are?
I and thou
In debate, as birds are,
Hawk on bough!

What so false as truth is,
False to thee?
Where the serpent's tooth is,
Shun the tree—

Where the apple reddens
Never pry—
Lest we lose our Edens,
Eve and I!

ROBERT BROWNING, 1812-1889, *A Woman's Last Word*

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FATHER IS A GENIUS

Ideas just come to him—ping!—like that

by J. M. YOUNG

IF there are rumours in the U.S.A. about a Scotsman who has discovered how to make genuine diamonds, various sizes, at a cost of about ten cents each, that Scotsman is my father, Andrew L. McGregor, of Glasgow.

My father is a man who must always be inventing something.

"I simply have that kind of brain, Margaret," he often tells me. "With a higher education I'd have been another Thomas Edison. Ideas keep coming to me—ping!—like that."

As he says "ping!" he snaps his fingers, and I feel as if I have a cold shudder round my middle.

His inventions have not all been as smashing a success as the diamonds.

It might save a lot of people a lot of trouble if I explain everything which led up to that breathless moment when my father, grasping his lucky crooked sixpence, said: "Maggie, pick any one you like and scratch your name with it on the window pane"; and I picked one, and thank my stars it worked.

It started three months ago when my father invented a way to save a quarter of the coal a ship takes to cross the Atlantic. It was something he sprinkled on the coal as the stokers shovelled it in. One day he came home humming:

> "*When I hae a couple o' drinks on a Saturday*
> *Glasgow belongs to me.*"

"Margaret," he said, "our fortune is made. I've found a ship's captain who is going to let me test McGregor's *Kolusav*. I sail for America on Thursday. When I get back to Glasgow your Pa will be a famous man."

I'd always felt he would bring off something great sooner or later, but I couldn't let him go so far by himself.

"You'll not sail to any America without me," I said firmly.

He's used to me looking after him. I've had it to do since I was five, and I'm fourteen now. I won't say he hasn't been a handful at times, but there's no real harm in him. He's an innocent

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lamb at heart, and he has genius. When he saw I was determined, he said he would try to fix up for me to go with him, and he grew so excited and talkative that I had to tell him something I once read about Thomas Edison.

"He was always having naps in the daytime," I said, "to give his brainbox a rest." I sat him down and took off his trousers, so that he had to go to bed.

I never thought this ship's captain would even remember my father when he sobered up. But he did, and he still believed in McGregor's *Kolusav*, and that was how the dream of my young life came true. I've always ached to get to America.

Let nobody say my father idled on that voyage. He was in the stokehole day and night weighing out the stuff and putting just the right dose on every shovelful. The ship didn't blow up nor the cargo take fire nor anything, and I thought, Maggie, my lass, this is just fine. Good old Pa!

It came to the last day. I was up on deck with three of the sailors, straining my eyes for my first glimpse of the Statue of Liberty. Suddenly there was a shouting, and I saw Captain M'Curdie chasing Father all over the ship with a heavy iron bar. I rushed between them.

"Let me get at him!" said the captain, and I was not exactly flabbergasted when I'd sifted out the few words that weren't blistering Clydeside oaths. I gathered that the ship had used several tons more coal than usual on that crossing.

The three sailors helped me to hold the captain back till he had cooled down a bit, and in the end the worst that happened was that the pair of us were turfed off the ship at New York.

It took us six grim weeks to work our way to Chicago, where my Aunt Minnie lives, but it was a grand feeling the day we walked up to a fine white house and rang the bell, and a plump, pink-faced woman came to the door.

"Hallo, Min!" said my father. "Guess who?"

She stared, and put her hands to her breast.

"It couldn't be my brother Andrew and his girl?" she cried.

Poor Aunt Minnie! It was a shock to her, I know. Pa was more than a bit shabby, what with being in the stokehole all the time and with only the one suit. I wasn't much of a picture myself, but she looked at me, and tears came into her eyes, and the next thing I knew I was in her arms being hugged and kissed.

"You poor motherless bairn!" she was saying. "You dear unlucky lamb, there's nothing I wouldn't do for you!"

It was a lovely, warm-hearted welcome indeed.

Uncle Fred, her husband, had a big job in a bank. He was the one who stood at the counter handing out the money. He

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was a tall, grey-haired gentleman with spectacles, and he had a lot of wrinkles on his brow. He had a few more before we left.

He couldn't get over the sight of the pair of us.

"Your brother, Minnie?" he kept saying. "Your brother?"

"Blood is thicker than water," Aunt Minnie said. "They're staying here for a day or two till we see what's to be done."

I've noticed before that childless middle-aged married men are often a shade fussy and pernickety. They don't like anything that disturbs their routine. Uncle Fred was certainly very upset. But Aunt Minnie spoke to him in the kitchen, and after that he took Pa upstairs, and when they came down again I hardly knew my father. He was washed and shaved and brushed. He was in a smart blue suit of Uncle Fred's, and he was even wearing a collar and tie, a thing I'd never seen on him before.

"You needn't be ashamed of me now, Min!" he beamed.

I'd like to tell about the jovial times Uncle Fred's friends had, dropping in to laugh at father's quaint yarns, but I must hurry on and explain how the diamonds came to be invented. And first I must clear up some things about a very delicate subject.

I mean the seven robberies at Uncle Fred's bank.

Father didn't hit it off with Uncle Fred, though he was very proud of him. Who wouldn't be? Father was always asking: "Fred, when can I come down and see you dishing out the dollars? Jings, it's not every man has a brother-in-law a big shot in a bank in Chicago! When can I come?"

Uncle Fred kept saying: "Oh, some time"; and it was pretty plain that he meant never if he could help it, but Pa kept on at him, and in the end he took us down one evening when the bank was closed and let us look at the outside of it.

As we stood admiring it, a man came along with a leather bag, and lifted up a kind of metal lid under one of the windows, and pushed the bag into a hole there.

"What did he do that for?" my father asked.

"That's the night chute," Uncle Fred said. "We were one of the first banks in Chicago to have one. Customers wanting to deposit valuables after the bank is closed put them in there."

Uncle Fred wanted to get back, but you could never take my father from some cute invention he was seeing for the first time. He had to lift the lid and peer down the hole and ask all about how it worked.

"Is there a chap down at the bottom of the chute," he said, "catching the stuff and putting it into the safe?"

"There's no one at the bottom of the chute," said Uncle Fred. "Everything slides down into the vaults, where it is found and dealt with in the morning."

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" But why doesn't somebody fish it out again and pinch it ? "

" Naturally," said Uncle Fred, " it is made burglar-proof."

" There's bound to be some way to burgle it," said Pa. " What goes in must be able to be taken out. It stands to reason."

That was what began it. They argued all the way home. Pa kept his sunny temper, but Uncle did not.

" Can't you take my word for it ? " he was shouting when we got to the house. " The thing is absolutely burglar-proof ! "

" I still say there must be some way," Pa insisted in a quiet but dogged tone—and I knew him and his inventive mind only too well. I started even then to get that awful feeling round my middle again.

To me, Aunt Minnie was an angel in human shape. She must have spent a fortune on me. Clothes, shoes, hairdo, manicure—I couldn't even have dreamed the half of it. I'm tall and well developed, with auburn hair, and it came to be that every time I looked in a mirror and saw this fashionable young lady I just had to screw up my nose at myself to make sure it was me.

Auntie spoke a lot about getting my father a job somewhere—California, or Canada, or anywhere good and far away—and about me staying on with her like her daughter. That would have been fine for me—but who'd have looked after Pa ?

" If he goes, I have to go, too," I said sadly.

Each time I told her that, she would take me out and buy me another dress or something, and she was surprised when one day I said I didn't want any more clothes.

" Can I have something from a toyshop ? " I asked.

Aunt Minnie hugged me, as she often did, and called me her own bairn, and said I was wise not wanting to hurry the last of my childhood away. She was so touched that I was ashamed to tell her I didn't want a toy for myself. I was uneasy about Father wandering round muttering to himself : " There must be some way . . ." I was looking for something to distract his mind.

The first thing I got was called " The most powerful toy magnet in the world." I thought that might please him. Then I caught sight of a super-sized chemistry set in a wooden cabinet, with glass jars of chemicals and test tubes and I don't know what.

" Has it anything that could explode ? " I asked the salesman.

" Not the slightest danger," he said.

" Or anything poisonous ? Or anything that could burn holes in the furniture or do damage in a house ? "

" I can assure you it's perfectly safe."

" Then that's the very thing for me," I said—and never did I imagine that at that moment I was laying the foundations, as it

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were, for my father's invention of how to make diamonds.

I really thought the magnet and the chemistry set might keep his mind off that night chute. What a hope! Not half an hour after he saw them he suddenly snapped his fingers.

"Ping!" he said, and his eyes were sparkling.

That cold shudder went round me once more.

"What this time?" I asked.

"I've got to think," he answered. "I've got to think!."

For several days he wandered off alone, absorbed. One morning I followed him, and he arrived at a burnt-out building where a crowd of kids were queueing up for turns to slide down a steeply sloping steel girder. Pa joined the queue! He was carrying a parcel, and when his turn came he didn't take a slide. He laid his parcel on the girder. It shot away from him.

"Stop!" he shouted—and blamed if the parcel didn't stop!

The kids got him to do it again and again. It stopped to order every time. That's clever, I thought—and then my mind began to work. I took him to a quiet seat in a park.

"Pa," I said, "don't tell me you've invented how to rob the night chute at Uncle Fred's bank! Don't tell me!"

"It just came to me—ping!—like that," he said.

I made him unwrap his parcel. Inside there was a canvas bag, the mouth of it fitted with springs, so that when you let loose a small catch it opened out big and wide. Six magnets were fastened to one side of the bag, and there was a seventh one attached by about a yard of string and dangling down.

"I told you it could be done!" he said. "There are only a few night chutes in Chicago that could be robbed this way, but Uncle Fred's is one of them. I've been inquiring and I know. The chute is lined with steel. You slip my bag in. The magnets stop it and it opens out. This magnet on the string stays close to the top. Somebody comes and drops in a wallet of money . . ."

"But Pa!" I cried, "you wouldn't rob a bank?"

The joy and spirit went out of him. He shook his head so sadly that I couldn't help being heart sorry for him.

"That's the devil of it," he groaned. "I'm an honest man."

And so he is, and always has been. We've faced a lot of trouble together, me and him, but I've never known him do anything deliberately crooked. I understood what a sorrow it was to him to have a wonderful invention that worked like one o'clock, and yet he couldn't make any use of it because of his principles.

"Show it to Uncle Fred," I said. "He'll admit you were right. He might even let you test it to prove your point."

But Father and Uncle Fred were hardly on speaking terms by then, and when we went home he put his invention

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away, and I got him interested in the chemistry set.

That might have been the end of it, but just then there was a lot of news and pictures in the Chicago papers about a certain Marco Visocchi. This Marco Visocchi had had a huge party with over a thousand guests, including all but one of the chorus girls of all the shows then running in the place. The one who had refused to go had her picture in the papers, too.

"I wouldn't be seen dead with that heel," she had said.

The party was to celebrate his getting out of jail.

"What was he in quod for?" I asked Aunt Minnie.

"Don't discuss it!" said Uncle Fred sternly. "Remember Mr. Visocchi is one of my bank's biggest clients."

"I'll tell you what he went to jail for," said Aunt Minnie, who wasn't getting on very well with Uncle Fred those days. "He was chased round Chicago by a posse of police, and when they caught up with him there were two men in his car bound and gagged, and another man with a bullet through his head, and a big safe that had been stolen from some factory."

"It was an exceptionally small safe," barked Uncle Fred.

"A small one, then. Anyhow, he managed to explain it away, and the dead man, too. The pair who were bound and gagged said so far as they were concerned it was just a bit of innocent fun. They sent him to prison for dangerous driving."

"For mercy's sake!" Pa cried. "I thought you were going to say he was one of the big gangsters."

"Whist!" said Aunt Minnie, with a look at Uncle Fred, who went stalking out very offended.

Father sat and studied the papers for a while—the pictures of Marco Visocchi and his crowd of guests, and this Maidie Bishop, the only one who had refused to go to the party. Then all of a sudden he snapped his fingers.

"Ping!" he said. He was up and out before I could stop him.

I couldn't get a word out of Father about what he was up to. But three days after that things began to happen very fast.

In the first place there was a bit in the morning paper about a rich woman who swore she had put her jewels in the night chute at Uncle Fred's bank, and they weren't to be found in the vault.

"Pa, you didn't do it?" I cried.

"I was at home all day yesterday, wasn't I?" he said, and so he was, working with the chemistry set. But he had a kind of smug look; and the minute Uncle Fred was home Pa was at him.

"So your night chute can be robbed after all!" he crowed.

"The night chute is burglar-proof," Uncle Fred said.

"How about this in the paper, then?"

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"The lady concerned is a client of my bank," said Uncle, very dignified, "and I can't discuss her. But if her jewels had been put down the chute last night they would have been in the vault this morning."

"That's what you think!" said Pa, and he gave me a huge wink, though I knew nothing about anything. The two were getting set for what might have been a nasty argument when there was a loud knock at the door and I answered it. The visitors were two men: a tall, gaunt one who'd have looked just right wearing a tall hat and driving a hearse, and a tubby one who asked: "Is Mr. McGregor at home, babe?"

"I'm his daughter," I said, spreading my legs so I took up the whole doorway. "What d'you want with him?"

With that three cars came roaring up from different directions, and a dozen policemen leapt out of them. This pretty pair looked as if they wanted to run, but whichever way they ran it would have been into the arms of the Law. Except for one way, and that was past me and inside the house.

The tubby one gave me a push that sent me flying. The big one took something out of his pocket and thrust it down the neck of my dress, right against my skin.

"For your Poppa. From the boss," he hissed.

They tried to dash out the back way, but more police had come in there. They were cornered in the sitting room.

What a scene! Uncle Fred was trying to ask what it was all about, and Pa was standing looking dumbfounded, and the police grabbed the two men and started going through their pockets. They turned out, among other things, five revolvers, two knives, a hand grenade and three tear-gas bombs. That seemed plenty to me, but the police looked disappointed.

"You ain't got what you were lookin' for, huh?" the tall one said, sarcastic.

I tried to keep an innocent face, thinking he meant what was down my neck. As it had to do with Pa I wasn't mentioning that!

"Maybe not," said one of the police. "But we're pulling you in just the same. For what? For uttering threats and menaces to Miss Maidie Bishop at the Starway Theatre last night and preventing her taking her place in the chorus."

"Wouldn't you like to think that over?" said Tubby, sneering. "We were acting on the orders of Mr. Marco Visocchi—purely a personal matter."

"And I happen to be Miss Maidie Bishop's fiancé—another purely personal matter," said this big, good-looking officer, and the two beauties were hustled out, and I was just going to draw a long breath of relief when a pair of the coppers

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turned back and one of them made a dive at Pa.

"What are you holding in your hand there?" he demanded.

"Only this. My lucky sixpence," said Pa, very subdued.

He always fingers his crooked sixpence when things look desperate. They asked him—was he the owner of the house? And when Uncle Fred said it was his house, they wanted to know why Lofty Sharp and Tubby Gorman had been visiting him, and I didn't say a word because my first duty was to my father.

Uncle Fred got very dignified and said he was an official at the head office of the bank, and he might as well have said he was Al Capone himself come back to life.

"So!" said one officer. "The bank where Mrs. Blick's jewels took the wrong turning last night! And those two men visiting you, huh? A friendly social call, huh? Strangers to you, huh?"

And with that they clapped handcuffs on Uncle Fred and took him away. It was awful! But Aunt Minnie went after them to see about getting poor Uncle set free, and I had the house—and Pa—to myself. The first thing I did was to pull out what was down my neck. It was an envelope with one thousand dollars in it.

"You'd better own up, Pa," I said sternly.

He was absolutely, genuinely mystified. He thought deeply for a long time, and then he snapped his fingers.

"Ping!" he said.

"Out with it!" I said.

"It must be a present from Mr. Visocchi."

"What do you know about Mr. Visocchi?"

My father made a clean breast of everything to me, and there was not one speck of real guilt in his heart. Mind you, I'm not saying I agree with his viewpoint, but I do understand it.

"What did I do with McGregor's *Kolusav* when I thought I'd perfected it?" he asked me. "I took it to a ship's captain, who could use it. What did I do with my new bomb when the war was on? I took it to an army Major."

"And it blew out the side of a building," I said.

"Because they mishandled it. This latest invention of mine, Maggie, wasn't any use to anybody but a gangster, so I took it to a gangster, that's all. I didn't ask anything for it. His money is dirty money and I won't touch it. But an inventor is not responsible for the use that's made of his inventions."

"By jings but he is!" I cried. "You wait!"

"Is a man who patented a revolver responsible for the deaths of all the men who have been shot by it?" Pa argued. "Are car manufacturers to be called blackguards if some rotter takes an innocent girl out in his car and—you know the things that happen. It would be a poor world, Maggie, if every scientist had to answer

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for the consequences of every idea he produces."

It was above my head, the most of it. Pa reads a lot, and when he gets started he's a real philosopher.

We didn't go to bed, and I confess it was a mighty relief to both of us when at five o'clock in the morning Aunt Minnie brought Uncle Fred home. Poor Uncle looked just awful. What worried him most of all was not so much being handcuffed and taken away as the fact that the big boss at the bank, the manager himself, had been called out in the middle of the night to speak for him. But I must say I had one comfort. Uncle still thought Lofty Sharp and Tubby Gorman had just come to the wrong house.

That was not the finish of it, not by a long way.

Uncle went off to work in the morning very bleary and white and worrying about what the manager would say. When he came back to his tea he looked at Pa in a very queer way.

"How do you come to know Marco Visocchi?" he said.

"Pa? Know that man?" I said. "Don't be daft, Uncle!"

"He came to the bank today with a message for you, Andrew," Uncle Fred said. "He wants you to dine with him at the Roma Hotel tonight at seven! You! Dining with Mr. Visocchi!"

The way he said it, it dawned on me that Uncle Fred wasn't suspicious, but green with envy! To him first and foremost Marco Visocchi was one of the bank's biggest clients. My father can be quick in the uptake, too.

"How do I know him?" Pa said. "Well, I get about, Fred. I make friends. That's all. Seven o'clock, did he say?"

"Pa, you're not going near Marco Visocchi," said I.

"How can you talk to your father like that?" said Uncle Fred. "If he has a dinner invitation from Mr. Visocchi, of course he must go. One of my bank's biggest clients . . ."

Well, I thought I could be doing with a word or two with Mr. Visocchi myself, for I didn't want Pa to end up in jail. So I said all right, he'd better go, only I'd go along as well. And though I ought to be ashamed of myself, I admit I wouldn't have missed that night for the world.

Mr. Visocchi may have been a gangster, but you have to take people as you find them. He was a fine, handsome, genial figure of a man with a shock of thick dark hair and a captivating smile and very attractive twinkling brown eyes. He owned this hotel, and our table was set apart from the rest in the big dining room, and I couldn't have been better treated if I'd been a queen.

I had meant to lash out at him with my tongue good and hard, but he was so reasonable and understanding, he fairly had me disarmed. The minute I started explaining about not wanting

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the thousand dollars, he was niceness itself.

"I really am genuinely moved, babe," he said. "I thought your Pop was kidding when he told me he didn't want a rake-off. We don't breed 'em like that in Chicago, men with such principles. I'm sorry I insulted you," he said, putting the thousand dollars in his pocket. "It won't happen again," he said. "But between friends, babe, won't you accept a trifling present from me?"

He spoke to a waiter, who brought along a case with a string of the most beautiful little pearls.

"Jings, but were they stolen?" I gasped.

His feelings were mortally hurt. He said he could show me the receipt, and I thought—well, Maggie lass, maybe it's not right, but when's another chance like this coming your way?

So I let him fasten the pearls round my neck, and he sent an order to the orchestra to play a medley of Scottish tunes specially in our honour, and how could any girl help getting a kick out of a thing like that? Not me, anyway.

Mr. Visocchi said he quite agreed with Pa's point of view about an inventor not being responsible for what was done with his inventions. He hinted there were other things my father might do for him, and I had my own ideas about that, but they got talking in such a high sounding way about principles and things, they nearly had me agreeing with them. We had a slap-up dinner, with a glass of champagne and everything just like the films. Fine I knew I was playing with fire that night, and yet I confess I enjoyed myself from beginning to end of it.

But there was something else I certainly didn't enjoy. Every night either Uncle Fred's bank or another with the same kind of chute was being robbed. I told Pa it was time we were moving on, but he was in one of his moods. Nothing would shift him when he was trying to work out an invention. You spoke to him and he never so much as heard what you said.

"What's on your mind?" I kept asking him, but I didn't get an inkling till the night when at last Uncle Fred admitted:

"Yes, someone has discovered a way to rob the night chute."

"Right enough," Pa nodded.

"The highest officials of the bank are baffled," Uncle said. "It has to be stopped, but how? How?"

Pa was quiet for a long time, contemplating.

"What can be done can be prevented. It stands to reason," he said. "There must be some invention that could put an end to it. I've been groping for one for days. It'll come!"

Anybody might say it was as easy as winking for my father to invent a way to stop the robberies when all he had to do was to

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write an anonymous letter to the police and tell them about the magnetic bag. I said as much to him myself.

"I'm an inventor," he said, "not a double-crossing crook. It's purely the invention side of it that interests me, and as a matter of fact I already know one way it could be stopped at once."

"What way's that?" I asked.

"By lining the chute with non-magnetic metal, so that McGregor's *Magnabag* wouldn't stick. But that would be making use of knowledge I'm not supposed to possess, and, besides, it would only force me to go ahead with another idea I have for a kind of bag that would work perfectly in a chute with a non-magnetic slide."

"Don't you go and give that one to Mr. Visocchi!" I cried.

"It's hard, Maggie, hard," Pa said sadly. "There's him with a certain need, and me with the bones of an idea that might fill it. I'm torn between two loyalties, lassie. Pure science—and the Law. But the whole problem could be solved if I could perfect some device that would prevent any robbery from any sort of night chute, no matter whether McGregor's *Magnabag* or McGregor's *Stikkabag* or any other kind of bag was used."

Aunt Minnie still wanted him to go away, and me to stay. She was the nearest thing to a mother I've ever known. She used to love to brush and comb my hair, and she was doing that the day when Pa gave a snap of his fingers and cried "Ping!" again.

He reached for one of Uncle Fred's hats.

"Where are you going?" I demanded.

"To see the manager of the bank, in person," he said.

Heaven knows I didn't like it! But, my word, that same night I did have to hand it to Pa! He came home with Uncle Fred, and Uncle was no longer cold and distant with him. From that time on there was no more about either my father must leave the house or my uncle himself would go.

Pa had not only seen the manager in person—he had got a job at the bank! And, what's more, a special room to himself right next the manager's own, and four of the staff put entirely at his disposal, and Uncle Fred was all the more impressed because not a thing would Pa say about what he was doing.

"You ought to know discretion by this time, Fred," said father. "I'm on confidential work. Leave it at that."

For several days they went off to business together. On the Friday evening they'd grown so friendly that Pa asked my uncle to go to the pictures with him, and Uncle Fred went as if it was an honour. A change of face indeed!

When they came back they were arm in arm, both chorusing: "*Glasgow be-lo-ongs to me-e-e-e!*"

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"Minnie," Uncle Fred said, "I take everything back. I'm proud of your brother. Proud of him!"

"You've been drinking," said Aunt Minnie.

"Only a couple, to celebrate. I know now what Andy has been doing at the bank. He has been busy inventing a device to stop those robberies. Today he finished it. Tonight it worked!"

"Jings, did it work!" said Pa with a happy laugh.

And for the first time I heard Uncle Fred's laugh, too.

"Minnie and Maggie—I've got the pair of you to thank for it," Pa said. "That day you were at the hairdressing I just looked at the comb and—ping! Simple, really, once you've got it. McGregor's *Antikom* is a delicate comb-like arrangement inside the chute. It's so lightly balanced, a thing the weight of a ping-pong ball could pass it going down the way. But try to pull anything out, and—eh, Fred? Eh?"

They both burst into laughter again, and they had a grand time to themselves giving imitations of the different bells and bangs and sirens that had gone off when somebody tried to take something from the chute. All worked by electricity, Pa said.

"And who was the culprit?" Aunt Minnie asked.

"They caught him in the act. A man named Toni Arcari," said Uncle Fred.

"Toni Arcari!" Aunt Minnie cried. "That's Marco Visocchi's right-hand man."

"That can't be helped, even if Mr. Visocchi is one of the bank's biggest clients," Uncle Fred said. "You needn't look worried, Andy. Those robberies had to be stopped. And I think I know now why Visocchi got to know you and invited you to dinner. Through you, he wanted to throw suspicion on me."

Pa had turned very quiet. And as for me, it wasn't just like one cold shudder round my middle but a whole series of icy shocks up and down my back.

Uncle Fred looked likely to burst with pride when the bank manager himself in person paid us a call, and slapped Pa on the back, and said he must wait till the newspaper men arrived. Reporters began to roll in, and photographers, and when the sitting room was crammed full of them the manager made a fine speech of gratitude, and gave the photographers the signal just as he was presenting Pa with a thousand dollars reward, and their pictures were taken. Then all the reporters wanted to know who Pa was, and what else he had invented, and Pa opened out and began to tell them about the bomb, and McGregor's *Kolusav*, and a lot of other ideas, only thank heaven he had the sense not to mention that he was the inventor of the McGregor's *Magnabag*, too.

But my mind began to work, and I got in a real panic.

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" For Pete's sake," I cried, " you newspaper fellows—you can't print all this ! "

I might as well have been speaking to a dozen brick walls. They closed their books and folded up their cameras and went off to put it all in the papers.

They weren't out of the house half an hour when there was yet another ring at the door. Uncle Fred opened it, and I heard a gruff voice say : " Stick 'em up ! "

" Mr. Visocchi ! " cried Uncle Fred.

" Pa ! " I whispered. " Come on—quick ! "

" Quick ! " he nodded, and he gathered up the chemistry set, which was very precious to him, and we just didn't have time to stop and say goodbye or get my pearls or anything. We dashed out of the back door and set off hot-foot, heading east.

Perhaps my father didn't deserve that thousand dollars reward, but it certainly saved our bacon. I paid our fares to New York out of it, and I managed to get a small flat where we could lie low till we got a bit farther still.

It seemed a sad ending to the dream of my young life, but it had to be faced, and so had some other things. For one, I laid down the law to my father without mercy.

" No more inventions—ever ! " I said.

" But the chemistry set—I'm working on one . . ." he began.

" You can keep yourself busy destroying the last fragment of the chemistry set," I said, " while I'm arranging for us to get out of America. It's your life, Pa, and my future," I said, and he just nodded humbly and said he was in my hands.

It took me a day or two, but with money to pay for it a thing like arranging passages on a ship was little enough compared with some items I've had to see to in my time. The afternoon came when I went breezing happily back to our flat with the news that we were sailing that evening.

When I reached the building, what was standing at the kerb outside but Marco Visocchi's big yellow car ! I went tearing upstairs. Our door had been burst open. I ran into the kitchen, to find myself looking down the business end of a revolver. At the other end of it was Mr. Visocchi himself, and a very tough looking customer had Pa covered, too, as they say. I never did know how we were traced, unless it was through somebody recognizing Pa from his pictures in the papers.

" Don't make a sound, babe," Mr. Visocchi said. " I don't want to have to rub out a pretty kid like you. Sit down and take it easy—and tell me what the trick is. Tell me the truth, babe, and I might be kind to you. Where did your Pop get the diamonds?"

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I stared at Pa, and instead of being frightened or anything he was fair beaming with joy and excitement.

"I made them!" he said. "I invented them!"

"Shut your trap!" said Mr. Visocchi. "Babe—the truth!"

"But she doesn't know!" Pa cried. "It happened when she was out. Maggie, I was destroying the chemistry set, as I promised. I was emptying the stuff into the fire, a little from each bottle at a time, and noting the different coloured flames they made. Then my crooked sixpence slipped out of my pocket and into the fire with the rest . . ."

"Shut your trap!" said Mr. Visocchi, but it was as if Pa had not a nerve in his body. He was so happy, he was inspired.

"Mr. Visocchi," he said, "don't you understand I've invented how to make diamonds?/ Genuine diamonds, various sizes, and they don't cost more than ten cents each!"

"I don't believe it," said Mr. Visocchi.

"They're there, before your eyes! I was telling you, Maggie—my crooked sixpence fell in the fire, and I was raking in the ashes looking for it, and when I found it there was a diamond lying beside it! I went on raking, and I sifted out seven of them. Look at them on the table there, sparkling!. It had only just happened when these two came in saying they were going to shoot me."

"Oh, Mr. Visocchi, you wouldn't!" I cried.

"I'm going to shoot him, babe," Mr. Visocchi said. "Nobody has ever double-crossed me and missed getting shot."

"But, honestly, he didn't mean . . ."

"Never mind what I meant!" Pa cut in. "They still don't realize it's genuine diamonds, that's the trouble. Maggie, pick any one you like and scratch your name on the window pane!"

I picked one up at random and went to the window, and it was no bother at all. It bit into the glass with a sound that set my teeth on edge. My name is there now to prove it.

If Mr. Visocchi was flabbergasted, so was I. But there it was, and, knowing Pa, I could see it wasn't any trick he was playing. His eyes had that happy sparkle that only comes into them when some idea of his has worked out fine and dandy.

"Mr. Visocchi, it's right enough," I said.

"I don't believe it! I don't believe it!"

"Well, then, I'll tell you what," said Pa. "Let your friend here take the seven of them to any jeweller you like. Take an expert's verdict, not mine. And while he's away," Pa added, as cool as anything, "I'll make you some more!"

A man doesn't reach a position like Mr. Visocchi's—owner of a huge hotel and a king of the underworld and everything—without having a bit of sense in his brainbox. He could see as well as I

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could that Pa was in solemn earnest.

"Butch," he said to the other one, "take 'em along to Joe Verlani. Find out if they're real sparklers."

Butch went off, and Pa lit a fresh fire in the stove and from the bottles of the chemistry set he started pouring little quantities in—first this, and then that,-and all the time pretty coloured flames coming up, blue and green and red.

"Just like the colours that shine in a genuine diamond," he remarked. "This is a historic moment, Mr. Visocchi."

"I still don't believe it!"

The stove roared away, and after a time Pa got the poker and raked out the fire. He scraped out the ashes and spread them on the hearth and rubbed every particle between his hands, but at last he looked up with all the sorrows of the world on his face.

"No diamonds," he said.

"No—no diamonds," said Mr. Visocchi. "You can stay where you are, on your knees. It's the last chance you'll have to say your prayers. When Butch comes back, you go for a ride."

There was dead silence for a while, Pa on his knees by the stove, me on a chair at one side of the table, and Mr. Visocchi at the other side with his revolver. I was just speechless.

The first sound came from Pa. He snapped his fingers.

"Ping!" he said.

"Shut your trap!" barked Mr. Visocchi.

"The catalyst!" said Pa. "I've got it now! The second time, I didn't use the catalyst!"

"What's he talking about?" Mr. Visocchi asked me.

"She wouldn't know," Pa said. "Nor would you, Mr. Visocchi. You haven't studied science. But I have. To let you understand, a catalyst is a thing you put in when you're working certain kinds of chemical changes. The change won't take place except in the presence of the catalyst—and the queer thing is that the catalyst itself isn't altered. Now . . ."

"Shut your trap!" said Mr. Visocchi.

"But I'm telling you, I did it, and I can do it again. The first time, my lucky crooked sixpence fell into the fire. It was the catalyst! Man, you've got to let me try it just once more! The same experiment, only with the sixpence in the fire as well."

He didn't wait for leave. He simply got busy, and did everything all over again. I noticed that one bottle had fallen on the floor, so he picked it up and tossed some from it in with the rest and I only hoped he knew what he was doing, and I wasn't one iota sure that he did. This time, for luck, he got me to rake out the fire. I scraped away till his lucky sixpence fell through. He pulled out the front and, lo and behold! I could see them for myself, four or

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five diamonds glittering and gleaming there among the ashes.

Even Mr. Visocchi looked impressed at last.

"Try them on the window!" Pa cried. "Try them yourself!"

But Mr. Visocchi was not going to put down his revolver.

"We'll wait for Butch," he said.

Pa was on top of the world.

"We're in this together, Mr. Visocchi," he said. "It's something that'll pay better than robbing all the banks in Chicago. Real diamonds, ten cents a time! This is it, at last! This is it!"

He chortled away, happy as you like, and Mr. Visocchi kept looking at those diamonds shining and shimmering on the table, and at my name scratched on the window, and at last he said:

"Write down your formula!"

Well, as he said that, I just seemed to see in a flash what was sure to happen. Somebody would benefit—but it wouldn't be my Pa. He would vanish mysteriously, and likely me as well.

I hadn't realized that after I raked out the fire I'd kept the poker in my hand. It was never intentional. But there it was, and a good big hefty one at that, and by now Mr. Visocchi was interested enough in the diamonds and in Pa writing the formula not to notice the way I was edging round behind him.

I got to his back, and, oh me! It did give me a queasy feeling, the very thought of it. If he'd happened to be a bald man I don't think I could ever have done it. But he had this bushy crop of black hair, and I said to myself, Maggie, my lass, it's your last chance, and I up with the poker and brought it down on his head with a crack that'll haunt me to my dying day.

Dear only knows if I killed him, though I truly hope not, for he had his good points. But we didn't stop to find out.

"What did you do that for?" Pa cried.

"Come on!" I said. "Run for it!"

I led him, protesting all the way, to the docks. We got aboard our ship, and in the evening we set sail, and, alas! it was goodbye America for me.

We're three days out now, but I'm not saying where we're bound for. Not me! Safety first! Because, you see, just one hour ago, I went to Pa and gave a snap of my fingers.

"Ping!" I said.

"What have you thought about, Maggie?" he asked.

"About the day the police came to Auntie's house," I said, "and didn't get what they were looking for when they searched those two. Mind the tall one that looked like a funeral?"

"I mind him fine," said Pa.

"I can see it now, like it was still happening," I said. "There was a minute when he stood with his back to the table, and his hands

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behind him, and I noticed him fumbling with one of the bottles of the chemistry set. I think it was the same one I saw on the floor the day you made the diamonds. Full of stuff like washing soda or something. I thought he was going to throw it. But he wasn't! He was hiding something in it!"

Pa just gaped at me. Then, after an age, he snapped his fingers. "Ping!" he said.

But it wasn't a bright, snappy sound. It was more like a punctured tyre giving its last gasp.

* * *

The Seal Who Became Famous

A seal who lay basking on a large, smooth rock said to himself: all I ever do is swim. The more he pondered the monotony and uniformity of his life, the more depressed he became. That night he swam away and joined a circus.

Within two years the seal had become a great balancer. He could balance lamps, billiard cues, medicine balls, hassocks, taborets, cigars, and anything else you gave him. When he read in a book a reference to the Great Seal, he thought it meant him.

In the winter of his third year as a performer he went back to the large, smooth rock to visit his friends and family. He gave them the Man-of-the-World stuff right away: the latest slang, liquor in a golden flask, zippers, a gardenia in his lapel. He balanced for them everything there was on the rock to balance, which wasn't much. When he had run through his repertory, he asked the other seals if they could do what he had done and they all said no.

"O.K.," he said. "Let's see you do something I can't do."

Since the only thing they could do was swim, they all plunged off the rock into the sea. The circus seal plunged right after them, but he was so hampered by his smart city clothes, including a pair of five guinea shoes, that he began to founder at once. Since he hadn't been in swimming for three years, he had forgotten what to do with his flippers and tail, and he went down for the third time before the other seals could reach him.

They gave him a simple but dignified funeral.

Moral: Whom God has equipped with flippers should not monkey around with zippers. JAMES THURBER

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Dark Enchantress

. . . Who knows not Circe,
The daughter of the Sun?

JOHN MILTON

Softly by Night

It is lust that guides the girl who creeps alone to her lover in the night. Slyly she steps over the prone bodies of her guardians; holding her breath in suspense, she feels with her feet the path that stretches before her, and with hand held in front of her she feels her way along the passage in the dark . . .

TIBULLUS, *translated by*
V. Sackville-West and Harold Nicolson

Gypsy Lure

Fringed petticoat
like a red wing of lightning,
flash of gold garters
on a bare brown knee,
and a cry
that was choked with threat,

the pent hot breath
of a kiss too long . . .

HENRY BELLAMAN

Enchained

His thunder is entangled in my hair
And with my beauty is his lightning quenched.

GEORGE PEELE, *The Love of*
King David and Fair Bethsabe

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RIGHT OF WAY

"Aye, there's a war on!" agreed Angus

by LAURENCE KIRK

WALLY had been in the prime of life for nearly fifty years. He stood over eleven feet high, weighed six and a half tons, and the only thing about him which was not entirely majestic was his tail. Any ordinary Jersey cow would have refused this appendage both on ornamental and practical grounds.

It is not known whether Wally ever forgot anything or not; but he certainly remembered a good deal, and he had been the undisputed ruler of his herd for longer than many younger elephants cared to remember. His sight had never been good, but this was made up for by an acuteness of hearing and still more of smell which would have shamed the best sporting dog. This perhaps is not surprising; for his nose, if you can call it a nose, was over eight feet long, and a single one of his ears would have covered a table which could dine four people.

It was, however, for entirely other reasons that Angus was interested in Wally. He had two white curved gleaming tusks. These tusks had never been removed from Wally and weighed; but anyone who knew anything about the market could tell at a glance that each of the tusks weighed over a hundred pounds. And as the price of ivory has averaged between twelve and six and nineteen shillings a pound for the last fifty years, it can be realised at once that Wally was an object of enduring interest.

Angus Andrew McNought came of a good family, which paid him a small annual remittance to keep out of England—or rather Scotland; and as he was a good shot and liked an open air life he became an elephant hunter.

Angus was about twenty years younger than Wally. When they first met Wally was the first elephant that Angus had encountered, but Angus was not the first human that Wally had known by any means. Angus trod on a dry twig in his efforts to get close enough for a good shot, and he just had time to dive behind an ant-hill as Wally and his herd thundered past like a pack of Gadarene trams.

From then on it became a point of honour with Angus to get

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his own back; and though he covered the whole of Central Africa and killed hundreds of lesser elephants, he was always returning to Mukongo on the Albert Nile, which was Wally's home, to square accounts. On two occasions, in 1925 and again in 1929, he was just getting that small area between Wally's eye and ear on his sights; but each time something happened, and the whole herd melted silently into impenetrable bush before he could get a shot.

In 1930 there was another difficulty. Mukongo was declared a game reserve, and that meant that there was no shooting there. Angus thought that that was the end. But apparently there was some succulent bush which Wally liked but which did not grow inside the reserve, so Angus continued to pay a yearly visit to Mukongo when these bushes were in flower.

For the next six years he and Angus played a game of hide and seek, not unlike the little man and little woman in the wooden house who are supposed to foretell the weather. Wally came out when Angus was in, and Angus came out when Wally was in; and they never both came out together.

But then one dry hot afternoon in 1936 Angus suddenly had the illusion that Wally was there in front of him, only eighty yards away, half a mile from the reserve, with his trunk lovingly caressing one of those succulent bushes. A moment later he realized that it was no illusion. It was Wally, unwary for once; and he lifted his gun. His hand shook a little. That was not surprising when it is remembered that he had waited thirty years for this moment.

But a second later he was as steady as a rock. The sights were on the exact spot beside the ear, his chin on the stock, his finger on the trigger—and then suddenly his eyes went misty. Angrily he wiped his eye with a dirty finger and tried again. But it was no good. He knew then that he could not shoot Wally any more for all that ivory. They had known each other too long.

The next morning he got up before dawn and started for government headquarters. There he applied for the vacant post of game warden in the Mukongo district, and after some demur they accepted him.

So, after spending thirty years of his life trying to shoot Wally, Angus set out to devote the remainder of it to seeing that nobody else did.

The first thing Angus did as game warden was to plant an adequate supply of the succulent species of bush inside the reserve. He knew that there was no law to protect Wally outside the reserve, and he was determined to do all that he could to protect not only Wally, but the whole herd, which now numbered sixty. He understood Wally's weakness for the succulent bush: he had had

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the same trouble himself at times when he got near a bottle of whisky.

Anyway Wally took the hint and stayed inside the reserve, and in the next few years the herd was increased by five little elephants which ambled unsteadily along beside their mothers. Everything seemed set for a peaceful life both for Angus and the herd. But then in 1939 Hitler did what everybody knows he did. Angus tried to join up, as he had in 1914; but this time he was refused. So he drank a bottle of whisky, felt much the better for it, and went on being a game warden.

For nearly a year life at Mukongo remained as peaceful as before, but then in June, 1940, Mussolini decided that war would be more lucrative than neutrality; and unknown to Angus various G.O.C.s, A.O.C.s and V.I.P.s began to get out maps of Abyssinia and decide how they were to push the Italians out of it.

Angus had done a lot of poaching in Abyssinia, considered it an inhospitable country with nothing but unwholesome water to drink, and thought much the best thing was to leave the Italians there. This, however, was not the opinion of the V.I.P. with whom the final decision rested. He was a man of action. After listening to all the arguments he decided that it was a perfectly simple matter to site the required airfields. And he took out a map and drew five rings on it, all at about the same distance from Abyssinia; and one of them fell right on that part of the reserve where Angus had planted the succulent bushes.

After that there was a lull for some months. As soon as the great man had made his decision a number of objecting voices were raised. The Governor, who was a lawyer by training, pointed out that there were two international conventions prohibiting the entry of Europeans into the Mukongo district as well as three others about the protection of game; while the Chief Medical Officer wrote a long memorandum regarding the incidence of malaria and a few other tropical diseases in the area.

But the great man had the same answer to all these objections: "There was a war on—Get on with it." So they got on with it. First came a sanitary squad to deal with the diseases; then huts were built; then men of various colours came to fill the huts; then the clearing began; and finally bulldozers and other yellow monsters appeared to prepare the runway.

There was unrest amongst the workers even before the bulldozers appeared. In spite of all the precautions a number of men went sick, and furthermore there were often big grey forms on the edge of the forest, apparently shadowing them. The men did not like the way these grey forms appeared and disappeared without even the crackling of a twig. Still less did they like the way the biggest form of all stepped out of the forest sometimes and looked

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at them with two long gleaming tusks pointing in their direction.

When the bulldozers arrived there was more trouble. Wally apparently had decided that this gross yellow monster had come to dispute the leadership of the herd with him. In any case, when dawn came the next day, the best bulldozer was found lying on its side, considerably the worse for wear, just as if it had been having a fight and got the worst of it.

They then tried firing shots in the air whenever the grey shadows appeared. But that was no good. Wally seemed to know that he was protected by three international conventions; and just to show that he still had right of way over the area, he led his whole herd very early one morning down the soft newly-laid runway; and when the cement began to dry in the hot sun, it dried with huge holes in it like a slice of gruyère cheese.

Angus then persuaded the contractor to light big fires all round the clearing at night. Wally had long recognized this as a signal to keep away; and he kept away. The Group Captain on the other hand got to hear of it and did not keep away. He arrived in a light aircraft; and he was in a furious temper even before the aircraft broke its undercarriage in one of Wally's footmarks, flung him forward in the cockpit, and removed most of the skin off his nose.

As soon as he had had a piece of plaster placed on the wound he summoned Angus to the Station Commander's office, a flimsy building with men still working on the open roof. He would have told these Africans to get to hell out of it if he had known the language; but he was not prepared to show his ignorance and started to give Angus a dressing down in front of them.

"What the hell do you mean by lighting these fires?" he began angrily.

Angus sat down without being invited.

"To keep the elephants away, of course," he replied.

"Oh!" said the Group Captain darkly. "They think differently at headquarters. They think it was to give information to the enemy about this airstrip."

"Is that so?" said Angus without much interest.

"Yes, it is so," the Group Captain retorted. "And it's a capital offence in wartime! Don't you realize that the work on all these airstrips is top secret?"

Angus looked up calmly at one of the men on the roof.

"Massindi! You speak English?"

"Yes, Bwana."

"Do you know if they are clearing ground with the yellow monsters anywhere else besides this?"

"Why yes, Bwana. They are doing it at Winga's village and at Mupende. At Nzoa by the hill and Bagali over the marsh."

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"How do you know all this, Massindi?"

"Why everyone knows it, Bwana. In my case it was my daughter's husband who came over the border from Abyssinia and told me what is being done."

Angus turned to the Group Captain without comment, and the latter bristled and said:—"You'd better tell all these damned natives to get off this blasted roof."

Angus did so; and when the last of the Africans had reluctantly left the roof, the Group Captain tried a different tone.

"I'm sure you've been doing your best, Mr. McNought. But we can't have these fires. We can't have elephants about either, and the only thing to do is to shoot the whole damned herd."

"Oh, I canna do that." Angus shook his head flatly. "It'll be twa hundred pound fine for each beast."

"But, good heavens, man, there's a war on!"

"Aye, there's a war on," Angus agreed slowly.

"Supposing I gave you an order, Mr. McNought?"

There was a long pause. Finally the Group Captain stood up and drew himself up to his full height.

"Very well, I see that I shall have to do it myself."

"Do what, sir?" Angus asked politely.

"Shoot the leader of the herd. That will keep them away."

"It might at that . . . Have ye ever shot an elephant, sirr?"

"I've shot almost everything else. And I've brought my gun."

"Indeed. And what kind of a gun would that be?"

"A double-barrelled .450!"

Angus paused a moment.

"That's a fine gun," he said at last, "if ye can jist handle it right." (He was really wondering whether they could run to full military honours for the Group Captain's funeral.) Then he ended, "Weel, weel, it's only twa hundred pound fine . . ."

Angus was very helpful in fitting the Group Captain out for his sortie. He provided bearers and guides and told him that he would know exactly when to shoot; for all the Africans would leave him and climb high trees at the critical moment. After he had done all that he could, he sat down on the doorstep of the Station Commander's office and waited, smoking his pipe. He did not expect to wait very long.

It was an hour and a quarter to be exact. First he heard two shots in rather rapid succession. Then almost immediately there was a heavy rumbling in the forest, and a tornado seemed to cut a lane in the tops of the trees. Angus remained where he was, smoking; thinking of the ant-hill which had saved his life thirty years before. He was wishing that he had told the Group Captain about the usefulness of ant-hills; but just then a figure in khaki shorts

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came out of the forest at the double. It paused and looked back for a moment, started to run again; then seeing the game warden's eye upon him, slowed down to a quick walk.

Angus tactfully got up and went away to his own quarters—where he drank Wally's health in neat whisky.

Two days later a detachment of R.A.F. Regiment arrived by road to guard the airstrip from enemy attack. This detachment had four machine guns which they proceeded to clean and mount at strategic points; and the Group Captain was seen in close conversation with the commanding officer round one of the machine guns.

Angus could put two and two together, whether they were machine guns or anything else; and he decided that something had better be done and done quickly if he was to avoid a second massacre of Glencoe. He accordingly collected a few reliable Africans, armed them with native drums, and proceeded to drive Wally and his herd into a corner of the reserve twenty miles from the airstrip. He found a comfortable spot there beside a stream to pitch his tent, and spent a peaceful three weeks keeping an eye on Wally and studying the flora and fauna of the district.

The same period was not so peaceful at the airstrip. Now that Wally had stopped interfering, there was a sudden outburst of interference from higher authority, and most important cipher messages kept the wireless busy day and night. The trouble was that the Abyssinian campaign was going far too well: so well that there was grave danger of it all being over before the airstrip was even completed. This put the great man who had ordered the airstrip into a quandary. How could he justify the expenditure of all this time and money on an airstrip which was never used?

If the time and money had been his own, he would no doubt have cut his losses and ordered all work to cease forthwith. But neither the time nor the money was his, and he decided that the safest way to justify his decision was to get the airstrip completed in time at all costs. To keep everyone up to the mark he named a date on which he would fly over in person to declare the airstrip open for operations. And as all promotions were in his hands, this had the desired effect and the work at Mukongo went on ceaselessly day and night.

The first Angus knew of all this was an urgent message, brought by runner, ordering him to return to the airstrip at once. Both official interpreters had gone sick, and they needed someone who could speak the local language to translate the congratulatory remarks which, it was hoped, the great man would bestow on the diligent workers. Angus obeyed the order and came back; and Wally, smelling something of interest in the air, slipped silently

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through the cordon which he had left behind, and came too, followed noiselessly by the whole of his well-trained herd.

It was less than an hour before the great man's estimated time of arrival when Angus got back to the airstrip, and everything was already prepared for his reception. Flags were flying on the more or less completed buildings, a guard of honour was waiting, and the four machine guns were mounted at strategic points. The Group Captain, too, who hoped for a pat on the back from the great man, if not a medal on his chest, was in good humour. He spent the spare time at his disposal in trying to instil some idea of ceremonial behaviour into Angus's hard Scotch head.

When he had finished, two things happened at the same time. First, a tiny speck appeared above the skyline; and second, Wally led the whole herd slowly out on to the middle of the runway.

The Group Captain was so shaken at the sight that he called everyone to attention and sounded the Alert. That had no effect on Wally, who remained planted with his wives, children and grandchildren exactly where the great man intended to land. And the Group Captain then proceeded to abuse Angus. Meanwhile the aircraft had approached and was already circling the airstrip. Presently the wireless began to get busy between the aircraft and the airfield controller, and the following brief conversation took place.

"What the hell have you got there on the runway?"

"Elephants," replied the controller truthfully.

A pause followed this. Then the next message came from the great man himself.

"Remove elephants at once!" he ordered. "We're running out of gas!"

Not being in a position to obey this order, the controller passed it on to the Group Captain; and he, having no one higher to pass it on to, wiped his neck and ordered the nearest machine gun to get ready to fire.

"Heaven's sake, man!" Angus than warned him. "If ye shoot them there, it will tak ye a day to remove the carcasses."

The Group Captain saw the force of this argument and countermanded his order. But he was now beyond doing anything constructive; and when a further plaintive message from the aircraft was reported to him, he turned with all the dignity he could muster to Angus.

"I shall hold you entirely responsible," he announced, "for any accident that may now occur."

"No need for any accident," Angus replied calmly. "Jist tell the pilot to zoom doon on the herd and they'll a' gang awa'."

A slight ray of hope appeared on the Group Captain's face as

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he passed these instructions on to the pilot; and they watched the aircraft climb away for the zoom. But then there was another interruption. An orderly ran up with a message just received by wireless. It began *Priority Immediate Top Secret;* and then the rest of it was in cipher. And as the cipher-clerk was sick, the Group Captain had to get out the book and try to decipher it himself, as well as keep a watchful anxious eye on the runway.

He was already struggling with the second group of figures when Angus touched him on the shoulder and called out in a voice no longer calm.

"Mercy! Surely the fool's no' going to zoom at them this way!"

But it was only too obvious that he was. The aircraft was roaring down right towards them on the far side of the herd; and it was already tolerably clear, even to the Group Captain, what was going to happen next. A moment later it did happen. Wally trumpeted the retreat; and the whole herd, with trunks raised, came straight towards them at a gallop. The thunder of those gigantic feet was an impressive sound; and Angus and the Group Captain both dived head first into the nearest open drain, while the crashing of timber and brickwork went on around them.

Neither a tornado nor a heavy dive bombing attack could have done more damage. When Angus looked up and rubbed the dust out of his eyes he saw nothing but the remains of wrecked buildings. Then as visibility improved and silence followed the thunder of feet, he saw the aircraft bouncing to a standstill while the guard of honour emerged, in various states of dilapidation, from drains and other hiding places. Finally he noticed the Group Captain beside him, in a dead faint, the deciphered message clutched in his hand.

Angus was able to read the message as he poured the contents of his water bottle down the Group Captain's neck. It ran:—
ABYSSINIAN CAMPAIGN SUCCESSFULLY CONCLUDED STOP SUSPEND ALL OPERATIONS.

Angus took no part in the acrimonious discussions which extended far into the night in the cracked and roofless Station Commander's office. He was dreaming sweetly of the day when the forest would have swallowed its own again; and Wally's trunk would be caressing one of those succulent bushes which had been the cause of so much trouble.

* * *

TOPICAL NOTE

Let your imports be more than your exports, and you'll never go far wrong. DR. SAMUEL JOHNSON

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SEAMAN BLAKE

"We did not meet by chance: I was waiting for you," he said

by NEIL BELL

KING GEORGE II was on the throne. The year was 1740. Life was cheap, especially a poor man's life. The theft of five shillings was a hanging matter. Had all the gallows in the kingdom been gathered together they would have made a sizeable forest. Everywhere and at all times Jack Ketch was busy, and almost as many children danced on air as did men and women.

They were evil days for the poor, but tolerably pleasant for the rich. For those who were both rich and noble, life was a gay and enjoyable affair. Servants were almost as cheap as dogs, and far cheaper than horses. A professional man or small merchant could keep half a dozen: a wealthy aristocrat a hundred. Some noblemen had in their employ as many as twenty footmen, and of these sometimes five would be running footmen.

The duty of a running footman was to run beside his master's or mistress's carriage when on a journey; and as approach was made to a town where it was proposed to spend the night, to run on ahead and advise the innkeeper of the coming guests. They wore a special livery and carried a large pole which they used to help extricate the carriage or coach when it was bogged on the highway, a frequent occurrence in bad weather. Some of these running footmen performed remarkable feats of speed and endurance and were frequently matched against one another by their masters for large wagers.

It was a sunny, late July morning. In Jelks's Coffee House in Fleet Street, lounging at a table smoking and drinking sherry, were two young noblemen—Lord Fyfield and Lord Castleton. They were discussing sport: boxing, hunting, coursing, fencing and running. At times the talk wandered from these manly pursuits to one even manlier and, unlike the others, not confined to any class or nation or race: the one unique universal pursuit.

They had been in Jelks's nearly an hour and had drunk over a pint of sherry apiece, so that there were occasional thoughtful silences in their talk, though the thinking was somewhat confused and hazy. Emerging from one of these reveries, Lord Fyfield said,

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with the irrelevance of a man who has been following exclusively his own train of thought, "I told him I would back Tom against any of his men over a thirty-mile course for a thousand guineas."

"You have great confidence in your man."

"Confidence? My dear fellow, I'll back Tom Longmore against the world for anything up to five thousand."

"Or anything up to thirty miles."

"Up to thirty thousand miles. I'll back him round the earth against Ariel and throw in the Equator."

Lord Castleton smiled. "Thirty is his best distance. I fancy I've a man to beat him over that."

"You're dreaming!"

"I'm prepared to back my dream."

"And who's the man?"

"My own Frank Barber: who else?"

"Good. And the distance?"

"Are you game for sixty miles?"

"Sixty thousand."

"It's sixty from St. Paul's Churchyard to the gibbet on Newmarket Heath. 'Twas measured for Sir Harry Verney's coach race."

"And for five thousand?"

"Is it worth it for such a trifle? Shall we make it twenty?"

"As you like. Or double if the winner breaks six hours. What do you say?"

"I'm agreeable. And now when? A week today, unless your man wants more time for training."

"Tom's always in training. He could start now. But a week today will suit me admirably. Twenty thousand, then, and double if the winner breaks six."

Lord Castleton nodded and called for another bottle.

The match between Lord Fyfield's running footman Tom Longmore and Lord Castleton's running footman Frank Barber aroused tremendous interest, and long before six o'clock on the morning of Saturday, August 2nd, when the race was due to start, a great crowd swarmed about St. Paul's Churchyard and spread along through Aldgate and the Mile End Road.

If the Quality were there in hundreds the Commonalty were in thousands, and the din as the hour approached was terrific. Odds were being shouted and bets taken everywhere. Street vendors were bawling their wares and the taverns doing a great trade. Tom Longmore was the favourite, being an Essex man, while Frank Barber was from far-away Devon.

Sir Harry Verney was the starter. Lords Percival and Rayleigh

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were the timekeepers; and Mr. Ponsonby, Mr. Spencer, and Mr. Leigh the judges. All these officials were mounted, as were Lord Fyfield and Lord Castleton, and would follow the runners with a change of horses at Great Dunmow.

The runners wore black breeches, white stockings and black shoes, with silk shirts in their master's colours: Lord Fyfield's red, gold and blue, and Lord Castleton's orange and black. On their heads they wore white linen caps with large peaks fore and aft, as the day promised to be one of blazing sunshine.

A white line had been painted across the street by the Churchyard, and at a few minutes to six o'clock the two runners took up their places. Having shaken hands and exchanged a few words with their masters and some banter with the crowd, they stood, bent a little forward, their eyes on Sir Harry Verney's pistol arm. Both men's faces were sun-tanned. Tom Longmore was a little man, thin and wiry, with black hair, high cheekbones, and a hooked nose. Frank Barber, sandy-haired and blue-eyed, looked tall by comparison, although he was no more than five feet nine, a height above the average for a running footman, as tall men usually lack the staying power demanded.

There was a roar of cheering on the heels of the pistol shot and the runners set off at a good pace, Barber taking the lead, with Longmore allowing him to go ahead some thirty strides or so, and then quickening his speed to maintain that distance with the evident intention of allowing Barber to pace him. Thirty yards behind Longmore came the starter, timekeepers, judges, and Lord Fyfield and Lord Castleton, their horses moving at a brisk trot. And behind them a straggling, jostling, panting, roaring procession, partly mounted on mules or horses, but mostly on foot, many blowing trumpets or whirring rattles.

At Stratford-at-Bow the distance between the runners was the same; as it was also at Chigwell, where helpers handed the men water which they did not swallow but simply used to rinse out their mouths. They would eat nothing during the race and would drink very sparingly of barley water, about a gill every hour.

At Abridge, Longmore had begun to draw up, and at Chipping Ongar was running level. Before Fyfield was reached, where Lord Fyfield had his country seat, The Towers, Tom Longmore had drawn well ahead, mainly for the benefit of the villagers and the staff of The Towers, all of them his staunch supporters and backers to the limit of their meagre resources. Longmore was now running very strongly, having covered the last five miles in twenty-seven minutes thirty seconds, and passed through the village smiling and waving his arm to a storm of noises—human and mechanical. Frank Barber, some hundred and fifty yards

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behind, had a mixed reception of cheers and boos, which brought a disapproving frown to my Lord Fyfield's face.

After Fyfield the way lay along the bank of the Roding as far as the village of Leaden Roding, and it was here that Longmore increased his lead rapidly, and at the half-way mark, near Great Dunmow, where the officials had a change of horses, he led by three-quarters of a mile and had covered the thirty miles in two hours fifty-seven minutes, only one minute fifteen seconds outside the record for thirty miles made in 1721 by Seth Warner, running footman to the Earl of Orford.

But after Great Dunmow, and before Bardfield was reached, Longmore fell upon the bad time that comes to every runner in a long distance race and Barber began steadily to overhaul him so that through Finchingfield they were running neck and neck, and at Haverhill, Lord Castleton's man, running as strongly as when the race began, had established a lead of over three hundred yards and was adding to it every minute.

But Barber's bad time was almost on him, and at Thurlow he had eased up so much that Longmore, now in his stride again, was almost up with him, and at Dullingham, fifty-seven miles from St. Paul's Churchyard, he was a hundred yards ahead, a lead he increased in the next mile to two hundred and fifty.

When Longmore reached The Coach & Horses, exactly one mile from the winning post at the gibbet on the Heath, he was a quarter of a mile ahead and the race was his. But the time was four and a half minutes to noon, and if he were to beat the six hours and win his master forty thousand guineas he had to run the mile under four minutes thirty seconds, an almost impossible feat for a man who had run nearly sixty miles at slightly over ten miles an hour.

Lord Fyfield rode beside him shouting words of encouragement which Tom, far spent, his mouth agape in a fixed distorted grin of pain, his eyes glazed, could not have heard above the tumult of shouting and cheering.

But he had no need of hearing. He knew what was being demanded of him, and five seconds before noon he staggered to the base of the gibbet and fell across the line and lay still, blood pumping from his mouth. He had run the race of his life, won his master forty thousand guineas, and died for it.

Two mornings later a young woman called at The Towers, asked to see Lord Fyfield, and was received by his lordship alone in the library. She was an extremely pretty young woman, despite her drawn face and anguished expression.

"Well, my dear," young Lord Fyfield said languidly, getting

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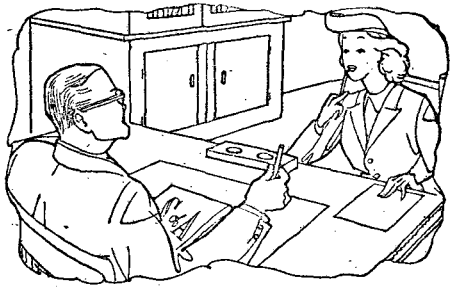
Question and Answer
About Success in Authorship



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up from his chair and making her a half-derisive bow, "what can I have the honour of doing for you?"

"Nothing," she said harshly; "you've done enough. You've killed my man. We were going to be married, and now he's dead and his boy has no father."

"This is news to me, my dear—sad news. We must see what can be done—if, of course, you are speaking the truth. Tom was to have had a hundred guineas. In the circumstances I shall be pleased to double that sum and, doubtless, as he would have wished, pay it to you and his son who will one day, I hope, be as fine a fellow as his father."

"I want nothing from you. Your blood-money. Is that all he was worth to you? He was all the world to me and heaven besides." She snatched a knife from her dress and, leaping forward, struck at him.

He flung up a warding arm and the knife pierced his forearm. With his other hand he twisted the weapon from her grasp and flung it into a corner. "Very foolish of you, my dear," he said with a smile. And then, as if he had but just noticed her prettiness: "Your rage becomes you astonishingly. Come now, let us talk sensibly. I have something better for you than two hundred guineas. What do you say to a nice little house in Kensington Village, with a servant to wait upon you and a carriage to take you driving in the Park?"

"And you thrown in?" she said savagely. "That!" And she spat in his face.

Again his arm saved him, but his face flushed darkly. He shrugged his shoulders. "Very well," he said, and rang the bell. When a servant appeared he said sharply: "See this woman is kept under lock and key and fetch Dr. Crane; I'm bleeding like a stuck pig."

At the trial of Hannah Phelps at the next assizes for the attempted murder of Lord Fyfield, the Judge, to the chagrin of his lordship who had counted on the pleasure of witnessing her hanging, sentenced her, because of her youth and the great provocation she had suffered, to transportation for life to Australia. She was to be allowed to take with her her two year old son John.

On a summer morning twenty years later Lord Fyfield strolled into Mr. Figg's Boxing Academy in Piccadilly. His lordship was forty-seven and looked ten years older. Mr. Figg was the grandson of James Figg who, forty years earlier, had opened the first boxing booth in London; but, whereas James Figg had been an illiterate bruiser with a battered face and rough manners, Mr. Figg was quite the gentleman, something of a dandy, and could cap a Latin

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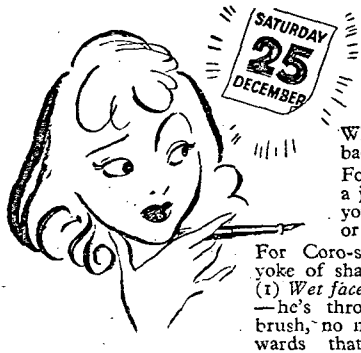

Mrs. Xmas' problem!

What can she give *her* old man when he gets back from the annual sleigh ride?

For other girls, however, it's no poser. Slip a jar of Coro-shave into the Christmas parcel you give *your* man (whether he's for keeps or you are still dickering with the option). For Coro-shave will free him from the years-old yoke of shaving bother. In three deft actions, viz:—(1) *Wet face*, (2) *Apply Coro-shave, thinly*, (3) *SHAVE* —he's through. *In 3 minutes only!* No soap, no brush, no mess. And a soothed, non-sore skin afterwards that winter winds can't nip. No chaps on your chap in fact. Can genuine goodwill toward all men go further? So forget that gem-encrusted cigar-case or that new yacht you *were* going to give him. (Anybody can give him those). Buy him Coro-shave for Christmas — and you might get that new coat sooner than you mink!

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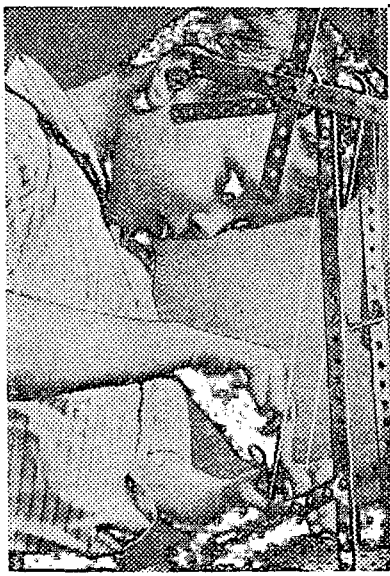

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tag with his noble patrons.

Inside the Academy that morning half a dozen of the ten rings were occupied by boxers, all wearing mufflers on their hands. Some were prizefighters in training; other were young gentlemen boxing among themselves or receiving instruction from one of Mr. Figg's pugilists.

Mr. Figg presently sauntered over to Lord Fyfield and, after they had exchanged greetings and snuff, said, "I've something good I'd like to show you, my lord."

"You invariably have, Master Figg," his lordship said; "and they invariably turn out to be like women: good only in parts."

"There was Tom Johnson, my lord," Mr. Figg admonished him.

"Ah, yes, Johnson; but one horse doesn't make a stable."

"I've a man who promises to be better than Johnson."

"His name and credentials?"

"He calls himself Seaman Blake. That is all I know of him or his antecedents. He stands five feet nine inches and weighs twelve ten."

"On the small side," commented his lordship, who was five feet six and weighed a bare nine stone.

"Big enough for any man," went on Figg; "and he's as strong as an ox. He's a chest like a barrel and shoulders like Hercules. He has been in London but four months, has had six fights, and has won them all in less than twenty minutes. His last opponent, the Hoxton boy Jack Silver, died from the mauling he got."

"And why have I not met this phenomenon?"

"Your lordship has not been in town these seven months."

"Is there no post?"

"I understand your lordship was ill."

"I am never ill. Is this nonpareil of yours here this morning?"

Figg nodded. "And at this moment in action."

"Very well. Let us see how he shapes."

A few moments later they stood at a ring in which two boxers, one a coloured man, were hard at it. Both men wore mufflers and were supposed to be merely sparring for practice; but the negro was taking severe punishment from his fresh-faced, fair-skinned opponent, who from the waist up was built like a giant.

Presently the negro went down, stayed down dazed for nearly half a minute, and then signified that he'd had, in his own words, 'plenty practice' for that morning. Figg called over the fair young man and said, "This, my lord, is Seaman Blake, the future champion of England."

"Who taught you to fight?" Lord Fyfield asked him.

"Tom Hare, sir."

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"Never heard of him."

"He's an Australian, sir. He taught me boxing in Sydney. That's where I hail from. I'm a sailor."

"Who's deserted the sea."

"No, sir. It was the other way round. We were wrecked on the Goodwins."

"And so you've turned fighter while waiting for another ship?"

"That's about it, sir."

"And propose to return to the Antipodes with the English championship in your pouch and a few good English guineas?"

The young man smiled. "That's about the size of it, sir."

"H'm. You shaped well just now, and Master Figg vouches for you. I should like to pull off the championship. Will you fight for me?"

"Very happy, sir."

"Good. We must fix up a few fights for you. You can't get into the ring with Champion White in five minutes, you know."

"I'm in no hurry, sir, as long as I get there."

"Good. *Festina lente*, eh, Figg!"

"Precisely, your Lordship; *perfer et obdura*, as Ovid says."

Lord Fyfield turned to Seaman Blake: "You're in training?"

"I'm always in training, sir. Ready to take the ring at an hour's notice."

"He neither drinks, smokes nor whores," Figg put in.

"Truly a nonpareil. Could you fight next Sunday evening here—a private bout?"

"Yes, sir."

"It'll be worth fifty guineas to you if you win. Now whom do you suggest, Figg?"

"Sol Hyams, your lordship. If it were not for *anno domini*, I'd back him against White. He knows more about the noble art than any man alive."

"Good again. I leave the preliminaries in your hands. I'm at Langford's if you want me."

On Sunday evening, before a gathering of some hundred or so sporting gentlemen, Seaman Blake, in a private bout at Mr. Figg's Academy, smashed thirty-five year old Sol Hyams into unconsciousness in the tenth round, having won the previous nine. The bout lasted only seventeen minutes.

During the next six weeks Blake had four more private contests at the Academy and won them without being fully extended, and all in fewer than twenty-five rounds, some of which lasted only a few seconds.

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TAKE UP PELMANISM
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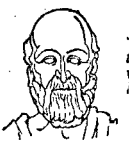

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Lord Fyfield then matched him for a public fight against Sir Francis Stewart's man Ted Crag, the winner to be matched with White for the championship of England.

The fight was to take place on Wednesday, September the twenty-fourth, on Newmarket Heath, and early on the Tuesday morning a crowd of sportsmen began to pour into the little town. By noon all accommodation was taken, and those arriving later had to sleep in barns and outhouses or camp out, unless they had been wise enough to book rooms beforehand.

Lord Fyfield and quite a cavalcade arrived at The Coach & Horses about the middle of the afternoon. His lordship had booked every room for himself and his friends, whom he proposed to entertain to supper with the lavishness which his guests expected, and he never failed to provide. The only man of the party who would be sober and in bed by midnight was Seaman Blake; and he, in fact, reckoned to be sound asleep by ten o'clock and up at six for a limber-up on the road for half an hour. The fight was timed to begin at eight-thirty.

Shortly after three o'clock in the morning Lord Fyfield was roughly wakened from a drunken sleep by someone shaking him. As he slowly and dazedly climbed up from the depths of unconsciousness, he thought he was suffocating, a sensation he presently discovered to be due to his being gagged. A single candle burned on the rough dressing table.

Beside the bed sat Seaman Blake, partly dressed and regarding him with a faint grim smile. "I thought I should never waken you," he said, "which would have been a pity. Don't move. Don't try to move." He leaned over the bed and rested one huge forearm across his lordship's body, adding, "As well not to try, for you won't be able to."

He sat silent, staring at the figure in the bed, and then he went on: "Listen, my lord; and while you listen, say your prayers, if you believe they are of any use.

"Twenty years ago you killed my father. He was a footman in your employ named Tom Longmore. I see you remember him. No doubt you will also remember my mother. She has never forgotten you. Don't flatter yourself. She has remembered you with hatred. She brought me up to exact that vengeance you escaped at her hands. That is what I am here to do. Presently I shall strangle you. Don't try to move. No one will suspect me. Should I be fool enough to kill my kind and generous patron? It will be put down as the work of one of the cut-throats and thieves now dossing in hundreds in holes and corners, in stables and barns, and in the courtyards and outhouses of this inn and half a dozen others in and about Newmarket. I shall scatter a few of

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your lordship's guineas on the floor as evidence of the hasty departure of the murderers.

"We did not meet by chance in Mr. Figg's Academy. I knew that you frequented the place when in Town, and I meant to wait there until you did come. What was it Mr. Figg said on the morning you graciously offered to become my patron? *Perfer et obdura.*

"Do you remember? Oh yes, I have a little Latin; we don't wear skins and live in caves in Australia. Well, that is all, my lord. I hope your praying is over and that you have made your peace."

That Lord Fyfield had been murdered and robbed during the night caused considerable consternation; but after some discussion among the sporting gentlemen it was decided that the fight should go on, young Lord Manton offering to take over the dead nobleman's wager and his man. The fight was, however, late in starting, and it was nearly ten o'clock before the two men entered the ring. Seaman Blake, as if to make up for this late start, knocked his man unconscious in the twenty-eighth round and the twenty-first minute of the fight.

Lord Manton was delighted, and out of his winnings of thirty-odd thousand guineas he gave the victor five hundred, and assured him that there was a further thousand awaiting him when he had beaten Champion White.

But, to his lordship's chagrin, and to the disappointment of everyone in England connected with the noble art, Seaman Blake declared that he had done with the ring; that the death of his noble and generous patron had shocked and horrified him and he would have nothing further to do with a sport that attracted miscreants such as those responsible for that death.

He proposed to return to the sea and would ship aboard the first vessel available.

He did not mention that he had recently received a letter from Australia which had taken three months to reach him and which told him that his mother was seriously ill.

When Seaman Blake reached Sydney his mother was dying, but fully conscious and daily asking for him. When he entered her bedroom, locking the door behind him and sitting down by the bedside, she turned her eyes to him and to the question in them he said: "It's done, Mother."

"Tell me," she said, and took his hands in hers, holding them tightly.

She interrupted him but once: "Did you spit in his face?" she asked; and when he nodded and said grimly, "Square between

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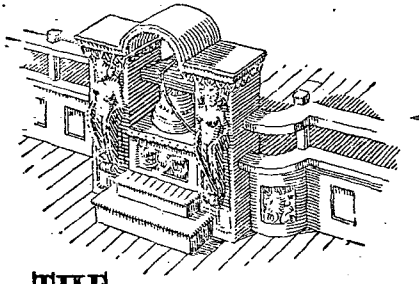

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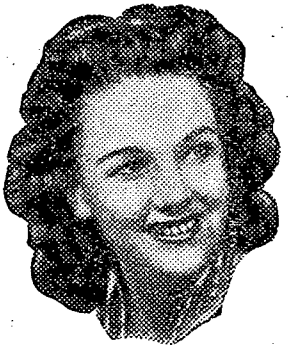

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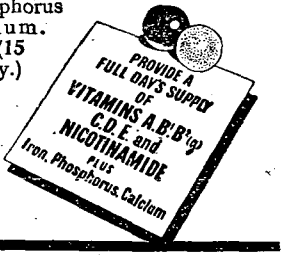

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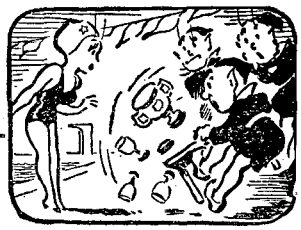

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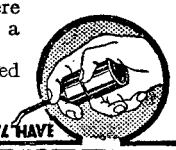

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the eyes, Mother," she raised herself slowly on her elbow and said, her eyes glittering, "Good, good"; and then, her voice strong and harsh, "Tell me how he died."

When he had finished she muttered, "God damn his soul." There was silence in the room for a long moment. She moved restlessly and then was still.

"Put my pillow low," she said; "I can sleep now."

* * *

SOLUTION to CARNIVAL OF ANIMALS on page 74

1. *The Elephant's Child, in Rudyard Kipling's Just-So Stories.*
2. *The Cat, in "Ode on a Favourite Cat, Drowned in a Tub of Goldfishes," by Thomas Gray.*
3. *"Nicholas Nye,"—a donkey—by Walter de la Mare.*
4. *Tom Pearce's grey mare, in the ballad "Widdicombe Fair."*
5. *Owl—who could spell his name "Wol"—in "Winnie-the-Pooh," by A. A. Milne.*
6. *Nana, the dog, in J. M. Barrie's play, "Peter Pan."*
7. *The Jackdaw of Rheims, in R. H. Barham's Ingoldsby Legends.*
8. *The whale, in the Old Testament Book of Jonah.*
9. *The Snark, in "The Hunting of the Snark," by Lewis Carroll.*
10. *The mouse, in the ode "To A Mouse," by Robert Burns.*

* * *

SOLUTION to ARGOSY CROSSWORD on page 128

Across. 1, Single file. 6, Hags. 9, Love of Mike. 10, Beau. 12, Four. 13, Lie long. 16, Ace. 17, Latence. 19, Talaria. 21, Thought. 24, Cadence. 26, Hoo. 27, Re-route. 28, Cull. 31, Apex. 32, Main chance. 33, Fade. 34, White night.

Down. 1, Silo. 2, Nave. 3, Look-out. 4, Femoral. 5, Lakelet. 7, Axe to grind. 8, Sour grapes. 11, Fell. 14, Better half. 15, On your head. 18, Ash. 20, Aha. 22, Grub. 23, The Wash. 24, Coconut. 25, Dolphin. 29, Snug. 30, Peat.

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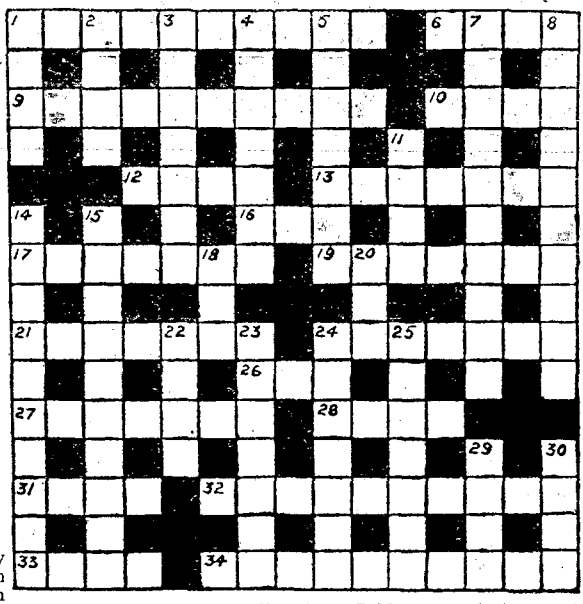
ARGOSY CROSS WORD

Solution on page 127



CLUES

Across

1 The solitary tool to which the Red Indian is accustomed? (6, 4).

6 "You secret, black, and midnight ——" (Macbeth) (4).

9 People are urged to do things from tenderness for the amplifier (4, 2, 4).

10 Geste perhaps or Brocade (4).

12 Just men? (4).

13 What the untrustworthy do in the mornings (3, 4).

16 Number one and first rate at it (3).

17 There's a lean tec here lying hid (7). (Reversed).

19 They lend wings to flying feet (7).

21 "What oft was ——, but ne'er so well expressed" (Pope) (7).

24 A fall, perhaps a dying one (7).

26 Kentish village that sounds unsure of identity (3).

27 Issue fresh directions by Reuter and nothing further (2–5).

28 Gather it in the scullery (4).

31 Tip top (4).

32 The thing egoists have an eye for (4, 6).

33 "Nothing of him that doth ——, But doth suffer a sea-change" (Shakespeare) (4).

34 Not quite the chessman for moonlight (5, 5).

Down

1 Farm store done in oils (4).

2 Where the scamp sits in church? (4).

3 The right post for King Wenceslas? (4–3).

4 You can make this from ale (7).

5 Enough to make an eel talk (7).

7 Many people have this in common with wood choppers (3, 2, 5).

8 Fabulous vulpine verdict (4, 6).

11 Lakeland hill (4).

14 Any wife to any husband? (6, 4).

15 Only if you're very expert can you do your stuff thus (2, 4, 4).

18 "O the oak, and the ——, and the bonny ivy-tree" (3).

20 Palindromic ejaculation (3).

22 The street to take your ration book to? (4).

23 It's on the East Coast of England, and is best done on Mondays (3, 4).

24 The aim of the shy? (7).

25 Fish or mammal? Some signs of a fin (7).

29 As a bug in a rug? (4).

30 A pet might find this fuel for the flames (4).

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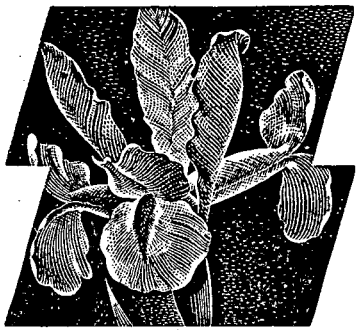

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